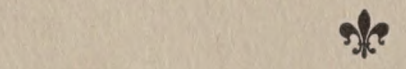
Marjory: The Circus Girl

STORIES BY

ALICE E. ALLEN



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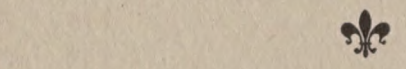

THE PAGE COMPANY

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"WHILE SHE DANCED SHE ALWAYS FORGOT EVERYTHING ELSE" (*See page 85*)

MARJORY:
THE CIRCUS GIRL

By

ALICE E. ALLEN

Author of

"Joe, the Circus Boy," "The Martie Twins," etc.

ILLUSTRATED

By

HARRIET O'BRIEN

THE PAGE COMPANY

BOSTON MDCCCCXVIII

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Marjory: the Circus Girl

CHAPTER I

THE PENNY BANK

MELISSA MAUD lighted the big lamp on the living-room table. She stirred the fire in the open stove. She raised all the shades.

"It makes things so much brighter for Father when he comes home," she said to herself. Then she went back into the kitchen to wash the dishes.

Robert and Herbert were in the corner by the stove trying to read in their new readers. Peter was in the big rocker with two kittens in his lap. Both kittens were sound asleep and Peter wasn't far from it

himself. Beatrice was still in her high-chair at the table. The kitchen had been so warm and cheery they had eaten their supper there.

If you had knocked at the door that cold rainy September night, and asked for Robert, Herbert, Peter, Beatrice, or Melissa Maud, Melissa Maud, herself, would have looked surprised for a minute. For, in the little village of Brookside, Melissa Maud Penny and her little half-brothers and sister had funny short names which were used so much that almost no one remembered their long ones. Melissa Maud was Lissy. Robert and Herbert were Bob and Bert. Peter was Pet. And baby Beatrice was Trixy. They were all the five little Pennys. And their home on the sandy hill just above the village was called The Penny Bank.

It was a good-sized house. Ever since

Lissy could remember, it had been about the color of the sandy road, with faded brown trimmings and blinds. Across the front was a porch partly shaded with vines. Over the front door, which was old, with quaint carving around and over it, was a big knocker. Lissy always kept the old knocker brightly polished.

When you went into The Penny Bank you found yourself in a small, square hall, with doors on each side of it, and steep stairs running up from it to the second story. To the left of the hall was a big parlor with Father's bedroom back of it. To the right, was a long, low living-room. Back of this were the dining-room and kitchen. Somehow, the Pennies liked the kitchen better than any other room in the house. Maybe because Lissy had to spend so much time there, and every one, from Father to Trixy,

always wanted to be where Lissy was, if they possibly could. Up-stairs were plenty of bedrooms; big, middle-sized, and small. There was a yard all around the house, with a garden back of it, and an orchard back of that.

Mother's Uncle Solomon had left her the house. His will said that, when Mother died, it was to be Lissy's. Mother had not lived long enough even to see the old house. But here, when she died, Father and John and little Lissy had come. Of course Lissy didn't remember Mother at all, or coming to live in Uncle Solomon's house, although she liked to think she did. She did remember a dear little step-mother, though, called Mamma, and a baby brother, called Bob. Shabby as it was, Lissy loved the quaint, rambling old home, and was glad it was large

enough to hold all the babies who had come to live in it.

It was a big house to look after and a big family to bring up. Lissy wasn't surprised, since she had tried it, that Mamma had been tired out and died when Trixy was a wee baby. That was two years ago. Ever since, Lissy had been the best little mother she could. Father had the yard and garden and orchard to look after. Besides, he carried the mail from Brookside up one of the long roads into the hills. He couldn't be expected to look after babies and cook meals and do such things. He did all he could to help Lissy. And sometimes, too, a woman came from the village to do heavy work.

The rain splashed against the windows. The wind blew in great gusts. But the kitchen was warm and bright with firelight and lamplight. Lissy was happy. School

had just commenced in the village. Bob and Bert and Pet all went now—this had been Pet's first day. Lissy had gone with him, taking Trixy in the old go-cart to see that he got started right.

"He's five years old to-day," she told the new teacher proudly. "And the dearest baby. But do you think you can manage him, extra, with all these others? Maybe I'd better take him back, and keep him till spring. I'm so used to him."

"I can manage him," the little teacher said, laughing. "Why don't you come to school yourself, Melissa Maud?"

"I did, of course, till Mamma died," said Lissy. "But now? With four children? And the meals to get and the work to do? And clothes to mend? And stockings—you ought to see the boys' stockings, Miss Dean. I'd have to bring them, and Trixy, too."

"It doesn't look easy," Miss Dean said. "But you're only thirteen, Melissa Maud?"

Lissy nodded.

"You'd think I was sixteen, though, I guess," she said. "Maybe I was born so old I can't get much older. Anyway, not in three years. Then Trixy can begin, and, maybe, I'll begin with her."

"Perhaps we can find a way before then," said Miss Dean.

Lissy thought it all over, as she splashed about in the dish-water. Trixy clattered gayly with a pie-tin and a spoon. Peter and the cats slept soundly. Bob and Bert read in funny high voices not a bit like their own.

"She looks like a person who can do things," Lissy thought, as she scalded the cream-pitcher, "if she is little and pink and pretty. Her name ought to be Doris Dear,

instead of Doris Dean. I wish John could see her."

When Lissy's thoughts reached John they forgot even pretty Miss Doris. John was Lissy's own brother—the only grown-up Penny boy He was a clerk in a big store in a far-off city. He was twenty-one, now. Sometimes he sent home suits for the boys, little caps and gowns for Trixy, and dresses and hats for Lissy. It was a good thing he did, Lissy thought. For Father's money couldn't much more than feed all of them and buy shoes and stockings and wood and coal—all the things you had to have. Poor Father—he looked old and tired, sometimes. Lissy wished he didn't.

She finished the dishes. She carried them away and set the table for breakfast. She took Trixy out of her high-chair to undress her.

Then, out of the wind and rain, there came the loud clear "Honk! Honk!" of an automobile horn. Bob and Bert dropped their books—automobiles didn't often climb the steep hill past The Penny Bank. They rushed to the window of the living-room. Lissy followed with Trixy.

"It's stopping here," said Bert.

"Something's busted," cried Bob.

"Don't say 'busted,' please, Bob," began Lissy. Then the old knocker on the front door went "Rat-a-tat!" "Rat-a-tat!" "Rat-a-tat-tat!" and then began rat-a-tat-ting all over again, as if very eager and impatient fingers were using it.

Lissy hurried Trixy back into the kitchen. The baby still in her arms, she took up her place beside the sleeping Pet. Pet was a beauty, and Lissy was sure he would be carried off some day.

"Rat-a-tat, tat, *tat!*" said the knocker most emphatically.

"Boys," cried Lissy. "Come right here. You take Pet, Bob—cats and all—and hold tight to him every minute. Bert, you take Trixy. Whatever you do, don't let her slip away. She's slippy, you know. Stay right here in the kitchen while I go and find out what's wanted."

Bob and Bert both wanted to go to the door. But one look at Lissy's determined little face and figure was enough. Bert took Trixy. Bob squeezed into the old rocker and took what he could of Pet and the kittens into his lap. Lissy, shutting all doors back of her, went into the little square hall. There, the rapping sounded very loud. A dog barked wildly down by the road. Lissy unlocked the door. She opened it wide.

CHAPTER II

NANCY SPINDLE

THE lights from the auto flared through the rain. On the porch Lissy made out a girl only a little taller than she was. She had a bright eager little face.

"Oh, please," she panted, "do let me come in long enough to catch my breath—some of it, anyhow. Get down, Fritz!" she gasped, as a big brown and white dog bounded up the steps, jumped at her, and tried to put his paws on her shoulder. "And do stop barking."

"Come in," cried Lissy eagerly. A brand-new little girl didn't step into The Penny

Bank very often. "Has there been an accident?"

"Just to the car," said the girl. "Joe's helping the chauffeur fix it. It won't take long, he says. You can't come in, Fritzie. You're too wet and muddy."

"He could, if it wasn't for the kittens," said Lissy. She couldn't bear to be inhospitable even to a dog. "Does he mind staying outside very much, do you think?"

"Fritz?" cried the girl. "Oh, no, he doesn't care—he's always wanting to go where he isn't—that's all. Go find Joe, Fritzie. Oh, but I'm glad to get out of that wind," she added, as Lissy shut the door and led the way into The Penny Bank.

"Let's go right into the kitchen," she said. "The fire's almost out in here. It's warmer there, and there's coffee waiting for Father. I'll give you some."

The girl followed Lissy through the dining-room into the big bright kitchen, fragrant with coffee. Bob was half in, half out of the rocker, one arm guarding Pet. Bert was holding as fast to Trixy as he could.

"Is-sy!" cooed the baby, at sight of Lissy.

"Oh, you lovely baby," cried the stranger. "Come to Nancy—wait, I'm too wet." The girl threw off her long coat and gloves, pushed back her veil, and held out her arms. To every one's surprise, Trixy, who was a shy little person, went straight into them.

"You darling!" cried the girl. "Nancy loves babies, and you know it, don't you? My, but it's good to get hold of a really-truly baby again. I didn't know as I ever would!" She cuddled Trixy close and sat down on the old lounge in the corner by the stove.

"I just love babies, you know," she said again over Trixy's head to Lissy. "And there's a dear little boy," she cried, as Pet, half awake, peeped up over the chair-arm at her. She reached out a hand to him. "I love both kinds—we've thirty boys and twenty-five girls now. Oh, but I'm homesick for them."

"Thirty boys and twenty-five girls?" cried Bob. "She couldn't, could she, Lissy?" he asked.

Lissy knew Bob wasn't polite. She shook her head at him. But she looked bewildered herself.

The girl chuckled.

"I feel so at home now that I've got this precious baby in my arms, I forgot that you don't know me. I'm Nancy Spindle, and I live in the Bernard Home for Boys. I help care for all the babies there, but mostly for

the girls, now—in the Betty Blake Annex. That's just for girl-babies."

"Did you just come 'way from New York?" cried Bob.

"Oh, no," said Nancy Spindle. By this time one of her arms was around Pet, who had climbed down from his chair to get a better view of the interesting stranger. "I've been visiting at Miss Jane Wren's at Wayside. That isn't very far from here."

"I've been to Wayside three times with Father," said Bob.

"So have I," said Bert. "But there wasn't anything there except the station."

Nancy Spindle laughed.

"Did you see a great hill back of the station?" she asked. "Perched 'way up on top of it, on the side away from the station, is the Wren's Nest—that's Jane Wren's home.

And that's where I've been since last summer."

All the time they had been talking, Lissy had been bustling about, setting the table and watching the coffee.

"Let me take baby," she said now. "You have some coffee and a doughnut. They're fresh—I made them to-day."

"Oh, please let her stay right here in my lap," said Nancy, as she sat down at the little table. "I can't seem to get along without babies. Really, that's how I happen to be here." She set her teeth in a crisp sugary doughnut. There was a worried little frown in her forehead as she went on. "You see, Joe's father—that's Mr. Blake—has a friend here whose child needed a nurse or a companion or a something—I don't know, yet, just what she did need. Mr. Blake thought it was just the place for me—

"'I CAN'T SEEM TO GET ALONG WITHOUT BABIES'"

much better than staying any longer at the Bernard Home. So Joe brought me over this afternoon from Miss Wren's. But when I saw the baby—she wasn't a baby at all—just a great girl, and so spoiled. I just couldn't stay—not even if Mr. and Mrs. Blake and Jane Wren and Joe and everybody in the whole world wanted me to. Could you live," she appealed to Lissy, "in a place without any babies in it?"

Lissy shook her head slowly.

"I'm most sure I couldn't," she said soberly.

"And you've only two to begin with—think of me having fifty, and then not having one! I don't see how any one could expect me to, do you?"

Lissy shook her head again.

"Well," said Nancy after a minute, beginning another doughnut, "that's all about me,

I guess. Now, what about you—I feel as if I'd always known you, but I don't even know your names."

"The boys are Bob and Bert," said Lissy proudly. "They aren't twins, but they might about as well have been. The little boy is Peter, after Father, but it's too big for him yet, so he's just Pet. Baby is Beatrice after Mamma, but we call her Trixy. That's all, except John, my big brother, who's never home, and me—I'm Melissa Maud. We're all Pennies and this old house is The Penny Bank."

"I shall call you Lissy," said Nancy, "just as the boys do. I think this is the loveliest house—but do you take care of it, and everything?"

"Most everything," said Lissy, "since Mamma died. You see, there isn't any one else, except Father, and he's always busy."

Nancy Spindle flashed a bright smile at her. Pet edged a step nearer, and Nancy lifted him into her lap, too.

"Is that your dog?" cried Bob, coming back on one of many trips into the living-room.

"No, that's Fritz," said Nancy. "He belongs to Joe. But he's always running away, and coming back again. He's the funniest, brightest dog. He and Joe were both in a circus once, and Fritz has never forgotten his tricks."

"He tries to reach the knocker," said Bob. "Honest-true, he does, Lissy."

"He's reached it, I guess," laughed Nancy, as a funny fumbling "Rat-a-tat-ting" sounded on the front door. "But don't let him in," she called after Bob, who ran back to the living-room. "Your pussies wouldn't like him a bit."

"He's knocking on the knocker!" cried Bob excitedly. And Bert and Pet and Lissy all ran to listen and look.

"He stood on his hind feet and rattled it up and down with his paw," said Lissy as they all came back into the kitchen, where Nancy rocked and cuddled Trixy.

While the rest were still talking about the wonderful dog, Bert, the only quiet Penny, came close to Nancy.

"Where did you say you lived, Nancy Spindle?" he asked eagerly.

"In the Bernard Home for Boys in New York," said Nancy.

"I know about that," said Bert. "It was in all the papers, last summer. Father read it. And there were pictures of the Home and everything. There was a Martha and a Martin Burt. Don't you remember, Lissy?"

Lissy nodded.

"Our Bert was so interested, because the boy had his name," she said.

"The Martie Twins," cried Nancy. "They got lost, you know, or Martin did. I suppose everybody read about them. Well, they're together at last, at Jane Wren's—the happiest twins you ever saw. She's adopted them both. That's why I've been here so long. I just couldn't leave them. I came last summer, you see, to help look up Martin. And Joe and I did find him, with Fritz to help. I'd almost brought them up, you know, in the Bernard Home. But they don't need me now. It's only babies that need Nancy Spindle, isn't it, Trixy?"

"Some one's knocking again, Lissy," cried Bob from the living-room. "And it isn't Fritz, this time."

"It's Joe, I suppose," said Nancy, "to say the car's ready." She hugged Trixy. She reached for Pet and drew him again into her lap. "Oh, how I'd like them both right with me in the Bernard Home," she said.

"You can't," cried Bob in great alarm. "Don't let her, Lissy, will you?"

"She doesn't mean she's going to take them, Bob," laughed Lissy. "Run to the door and bring Joe in for some coffee. Let the dog in, too; I can put the cats in the cellar."

CHAPTER III

WILLIAM GRAY GOES VISITING

BUT it wasn't Joe who followed Bob back into the kitchen. It was a girl with a rain-coat over her head. When Lissy saw her she paused on her way to the cellar, both kittens in her arms.

"She says she's from Overbrook House," cried Bob. "And she can't be, can she, Lissy? 'Cause it's shut up tight—and nobody could live there."

"Overbrook House hasn't been open since we came here," said Lissy. "You must mean some other place."

"No," said the girl. "Overbrook's the name of the place. I'm Annette, one of the maids from there. It isn't closed any more. Mr. Brook has opened it. Half the serv-

ants have come on from the New York house. Miss Marjory, Mrs. Brown, and I came to-day. And we've hunted and hunted in every box and bag and trunk, and we can't find Miss Marjory's Teddy Bear. And she can't and won't go to sleep without him. She just lies there and screams and cries something dreadful. She'll make herself ill, as she always does when she has such spells. So, I told Mrs. Brown I'd try to borrow one just for to-night. Would you lend us one, please?"

Lissy was brimful of sympathy.

"Why, of course I would," she said, "if we only had one. But, you see, we haven't."

"No Teddy Bear?" The maid showed great surprise. "One of the workmen at Overbrook said there were five children in this house."

"Four," corrected Lissy. She stood as

straight and tall as she possibly could. "You can see for yourself that I'm quite grown up. But we haven't a single Teddy Bear. Pet's always needed one, and Trixy, too. But there's not money enough for Teddy Bears after feeding all of us."

"No," said the girl politely, but quite as if she didn't see how any home with children in it could get along without at least one Teddy Bear. "Well, I may as well go back then. I telephoned the store—and there isn't one there."

"I don't believe there's a Teddy Bear anywhere in Brookside," said Lissy. "But, please, wouldn't William Gray do?"

"William Gray?" cried the maid.

"Our little gray cat," said Lissy eagerly. She held up a sleepy fluff of a cat. "I wouldn't dare let the little girl try Patrick White—this white one. Because, some-

times, he does scratch. I don't suppose he really means to hurt, but he does. But William Gray never does. He just purrs and purrs and you get so sleepy you can't stay awake."

Eagerly, the maid reached to take William Gray from Lissy's hand. But before she could say anything, Nancy Spindle, red-cheeked and bright-eyed, still holding Trixy and with Pet clinging to her, sprang from her rocker.

"Oh, why did you come here?" she cried. "Now, I suppose I've just got to go back and help look after that child. Oh, dear, I kept still all the time you were talking for fear I'd say I'd go. I knew if I opened my mouth I'd say it. And I don't want to go a bit."

The maid, cuddling the little cat in her arms, stared at Nancy Spindle.

"Are you the nurse who wouldn't stay at Overbrook because Miss Marjory wasn't a baby?" she asked.

"Yes," snapped Nancy. "Oh, you blessed Trixy, you needn't jump—Nancy isn't cross with you. It's just herself she's cross with. I'm sorry for you," she added to the maid, "if you have to take care of that spoiled child. And I've just got to go back and see if there's anything I can do, that's all there is to it. Maybe I'd be spoiled if I'd always had somebody to do things for me, and give me whatever I wanted whether it was good for me or not."

Just here the two boys, who had left the kitchen unnoticed, came back, bringing with them a tall red-cheeked boy of sixteen or seventeen. And jumping and barking about him, was a big brown and white dog. At sight of this last visitor William Gray

and Patrick White became two lively windmills of fur, growling in such terrible manner that Lissy and Annette were glad to drop them. They both jumped to the old lounge and drew up, side by side, to give battle to the enemy.

"He won't hurt them if they face him," said the new boy. "Just watch him. Sit up, Fritzie, and say you're sorry for frightening the plucky little pussies."

The big dog sat up meekly enough. He drooped his paws in a sorry fashion. But his eyes, bright and naughty, rolled eagerly in the direction of the two spit-balls on the lounge.

Everybody laughed. Then Joe put Fritz through a number of his funny tricks.

"But we must go, Nancy," he said. "It's quite a trip to Wayside over these roads."

"I'm—not—going," announced Nancy.

"You'll have to take me straight back to Overbrook, Joe. It's what your mother would call my duty. And it's got to be done. Unhappy as I'll be doing it, I'll be still unhappier not doing it."

First of all, Lissy said, Joe must have coffee and doughnuts, and maybe Fritz would like a doughnut. And the boys must take some to the chauffeur.

While they were gone, Nancy and the maid told Joe all about the trouble at Overbrook.

"So just pack us all in the car," said Nancy, "Annette and William Gray and me, and take us back as fast as ever you can, or my courage may give out."

Nancy kissed the sleepy Trixy and put her into Lissy's arms. She hugged Pet. She put on her coat and veil.

"I'm going to be your neighbor after all,"

she said to Lissy, her sudden smile flashing out. "And that's one thing to be glad about."

Back up the hill honked the car, leaving a wildly excited Penny Bank behind. It took some time to get the children quieted down in their beds—there were so many new things to talk about and wonder about. The Pennies were wild to think of Overbrook open after all these years—and a really truly little girl there. And Lissy was specially glad to think that Nancy Spindle would be so near. Lissy liked Nancy Spindle.

At last the old house was still. Lissy crept down stairs to the kitchen. She made fresh coffee for Father. Then she sat down by the fire to wait for him. He came almost at once. While he drank his coffee, Lissy told him of what a strange evening it had

been—just packed full of surprises. He remembered the story of the Martie Twins. He knew Miss Wren. He had heard of Joe's father and mother. Mr. Blake was a great lawyer in New York, he said. He did not seem surprised when Lissy told him that Overbrook was open.

Then Lissy told him how Patrick White was sleeping upstairs with Pet, because William Gray had gone to Overbrook.

"The boys are going after him right after school to-morrow," she said.

Then Father spoke sternly.

"You are none of you to go to Overbrook for the cat or for anything else," he said, "so long as the Brook family is there. Do you understand, Melissa Maud?"

Father never used the Pennys' grown-up names, unless he was anxious or upset or angry. Lissy looked up at him, amazed.

"I understand," she said, "that we are not to go. But I don't understand why, Father."

Lissy had been the little mother so long. And Father almost always did tell her reasons and such things.

"Never mind why this time, Melissa Maud," said Father. "You are not to go—that's all!"

CHAPTER IV

THE COUNTY FAIR

"COME, Billy, Billy, Billy!"

"Come, Billy, Billy, Billy!"

"Come, Billy, Billy!"

Lissy could hear the three voices coming nearer and nearer. Bob's voice was ahead of the others', with Bert's quietly keeping up, and Pet's trailing shrilly along behind, just as Pet, himself, always trailed along behind the other boys. In a minute, voices, boys, and all burst into the kitchen of The Penny Bank.

"Where's Billy?" cried the three together.

This was the minute Lissy had been

dreading all day. But she met it with a gay little laugh.

"William Gray must be having just the best time at Overbrook," she said. "He hasn't come home yet."

"All right—we'll go for him," said Bob.

He was half way out of the door with Bert and Pet close behind him when Lissy caught his arm.

"Father says we mustn't any of us go there," she said.

"Mustn't go there?" cried Bob. "I'd like to know why not, Lissy Penny? We go there most every day."

"I know," said Lissy. "But the house is open now, you know, and some of the Brooks are there. And Father says we must not go."

"We're just as good as Brooks," said Bob stoutly, "if we are Pennies."

"Father said," began Lissy—she didn't quite understand herself.

"Maybe Father doesn't quite understand," said Bert. He stuck his close-cropped head between Lissy and Bob. "We must have Billy. He and Pat must be on the Fair Ground at ten to-morrow, Lissy. The man told us so when we went for the entry-card." Bert held out a white card.

"Oh, let me see it," cried Lissy. She was quite as much excited as the boys at the thought of entering the two kittens for a premium at the County Fair. "Maybe he'll come yet," she added hopefully, as she put the important card on the clock-shelf for safe keeping. "You all go out and watch for him. But we can't—any of us—go to Overbrook. Father says so."

In the front yard the boys sat down in a

disconsolate row and gazed up the hills in the direction of Overbrook House.

"I'll tell you what," said Bob suddenly, "we'll go just as far as we can toward Overbrook, but not put one foot on the land. Father couldn't care for that. Then we'll call and call as loud as we can, and maybe Billy will hear and come."

It seemed a small chance, but it was the best they had. As the three boys started slowly along up the hill, Patrick White uncurled himself from a ball under the lilac bush and went along, purring and rubbing against Pet's fat little legs.

Bob and Bert climbed a fence into the pasture. Pet squeezed under, and Patrick White went under without squeezing. Then they went on till they came to another fence. Pet started to get under this, but Bob stopped him.

"Overbrook begins just the other side of that fence," he said. "We'll climb to the top rail and call."

Bob sprang to the top of the fence. Bert stood on the ground. Bob pulled and Bert boosted, and between them they got Pet to the top rail. Then Bert handed up Patrick White and climbed up himself. From this top rail you could see the tall hedge which went around three sides of the Overbrook gardens.

"Come, Billy, Billy, Billy," called Bob. He cupped his hands about his mouth to make the sound go farther.

"Come, Billy, Billy, Billy," called Bert.

"Come, Billy, Billy," piped Pet shrilly.

"Me-ow!" said Patrick White sharply. He was half in, half out of Pet's arms. Yet Pet held him as carefully as he could.

The boys took turns calling till they were

out of breath. Patrick White mewed straight on, paying no attention to turn.

In the midst of one of the loudest calls, into one of the gates in the tall hedge, came a little girl. She was dressed in white. Her hair caught the sunlight and was almost as yellow as the yellow leaves flitting down over her. In her arms she held a small gray wriggling cat.

"Stop calling," she cried, stamping her little foot. "He'll run away. You can't have him again. Billy is my cat now."

"He isn't not!" cried Pet, forgetting how to talk and how to behave at the same minute. "Billy's ours—and he's going to the Fair."

"He isn't," cried the little girl. "Father has telephoned 'way from the city. And he'll give you all the money you want for

him. I never had a really live pet before—and I want him."

"We can't sell Billy," called Bob. It was hard to be polite when you had to shout so. But he did his best. "I'm very sorry. But we can't spare him."

"We only lent him," went on Bert at the top of his lungs, trying to help along, " 'cause your Teddy Bear was lost."

"Daddy's found Teddy in New York, and he's going to bring him to me," called the little girl. "But I don't like him as well as I do Billy. Teddy can't purr. Daddy'll make you sell Billy. I must have him."

"I want my Billy," wailed Pet.

He quite forgot to hold fast to the top rail. The next minute over he went, coming right side up with care, as Pet always did, in the pasture. But Patrick White was so scared and upset that he was off like a

white streak across the pasture toward home, his tail as big as three tails should be.

Maybe it was the sight of Patrick White that decided Billy. Anyway, at this minute he took matters into his own hands, or feet, rather. With a sudden twist and wriggle, he was out of the eager little arms, and off after Patrick White. In a minute he, too, had disappeared.

"Bring him back!" screamed the little girl, stamping her foot again, and ready to cry. "He's mine."

"He's ours," cried Bob. He and Bert rolled off the fence and ran across the pasture, with Pet stumbling and tumbling along between them.

Looking back, the boys saw Nancy Spindle come into the gate in the hedge. She took the little girl's hand and talked briskly and cheerily to her. But the little girl

jumped up and down, and the boys could hear her screams and cries.

Next morning the County Fair was in full swing. The popcorn man was there and the lemonade man and the peanut man and the taffy man. There were bobbing dolls to be shot at. There were bunches of balloons like big bouquets of flowers. Roosters crowed, cows lowed, horses neighed, dogs barked, bands played, the Ferris Wheel went up, up, up, and down, down, down, and the merry-go-round went round. There was a side-show with trained animals, and a side-show where gypsies sang and danced and told fortunes. There was a man getting ready to go up in an airship.

Everywhere, too, were crowds of people. All the town and all the county were there. School had closed. Miss Doris was there

with so many children hanging to her that she might have had her picture taken as the little old woman who had so many children she didn't know what to do. Lissy was there, too, with Trixy in her go-cart. Of course Bob and Bert and Pet were there. They stood in a row before a box with slats nailed across the opening in which sat Patrick White and William Gray. Both had been washed and combed and brushed. Patrick wore a blue bow, which had been Lissy's best hair-ribbon. And Billy wore a pink one, which was to have been Trixy's if ever she had hair enough to tie up. Neither cat looked very happy. Not even, when, later in the day, a beautiful blue first-premium card was tied to their box.

Bob and Bert and Pet were all beside the box early the next morning. They had been giving the prize cats an unusually good

breakfast. They saw a tall man coming toward them.

"What do you want for the gray cat?" he asked, smiling down at them.

"You can't not have him," cried Pet. "Tell him he can't not, Bobby."

"He isn't for sale," said Bob politely.

"But it's this way, my boy," said the man. "I'm Mr. Brook—from Overbrook. And you're Peter Penny's son, I know. So, you see, we're next-door neighbors. Well, my little girl Marjory has an idea that she can never be quite happy again unless she has this very kitten. She isn't well and strong —I can't bear to disappoint her. And no other kitten, she says, will do."

Bob looked at Bert. Bert looked at Bob. Both looked at Pet.

"I'll give you five dollars for him," said Mr. Brook. He took out his bill-book.

From it, he drew a crisp five-dollar bill.

"Will you wait just a minute, please, Mr. Brook?" said Bob.

Mr. Brook nodded, smiling.

Bob and Bert and Pet had a sober little talk all by themselves. William Gray was dear to all of them. But the little Marjory girl wasn't well and hadn't any kitten and wanted him. And it was true that the little Pennies needed five dollars more than they did a gray cat. Five dollars and two dollars—their premium money—made seven dollars. And seven dollars would help some toward the shoes and things they all needed for winter. Or, maybe, they could spare it for a real Thanksgiving dinner—the kind Lissy had been hoping to have for two or three Thanksgivings.

At last they went slowly back to the Marjory girl's father.

"We'll sell him," said Bob gravely, "for five dollars. But the Marjory girl will be good to him, won't she? And, please, may he stay here with Patrick White till the Fair ends?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Brook. "Marjory must wait until then for him. But you may have the money now—which one of you has it?"

"We'll let Pet take it, please," said Bob. "Billy was more his cat than ours. And he'll give it to Lissy."

When Lissy heard about the sale of William Gray to Mr. Brook, she looked almost as if she was going to cry. But, instead, she sat right down on the floor and hugged Bob and Bert and Pet, and somehow found room for Trixy, too.

"We'll have the loveliest Thanksgiving

dinner!" she cried. "But don't let's tell Father—just surprise him."

The little Pennies did so love to help in Lissy's surprises, and the little Marjory girl was going to be so happy with Billy, and they had Patrick White left and the precious five dollars, so they couldn't be very unhappy. They told William Gray the news. He didn't seem to care whether he was to be a poor Penny cat or a rich Brook cat. But he said plainly that he would be glad to get out of his box and go home somewhere again.

So that day went by and the next. And the last day of the Fair, in the afternoon, when everybody was going home and tents were coming down, and booths looked empty and forsaken, Thomas, a servant from Overbrook, came to the Penny boys, who were watching the merry-go-round

come to pieces ready for its journey to the next fair.

"Mr. Brook has sent for the gray cat," he said.

But when the man and Bob and Bert and Pet came up to the box, there behind the slats under the blue first-prize card, all alone in his blue bow, sat Patrick White. William Gray was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER V

LISSY'S THANKSGIVING DINNER

BOB was sure that William Gray had been in his box at noon. But neither of the boys had been there since, so no one knew just how long he had been gone.

"He's probably gone home," said Bert.

Thomas shook his head.

"But you can run home and look," he said, "while I look around the grounds. He was an unusually fine cat—that gray one was."

So Bob with the empty box, and Bert with Patrick White, ran home. Pet, tired out with so much Fair, had gone home early

with Trixy and Lissy and Doris Dean. They were all sitting out under the trees in the yard when the boys dashed up.

"Billy here?" cried Bob, long before Lissy could hear what he said. When she did, she shook her head.

"Of course not," she said. "How could he get out of his box, Bobby?"

"Well, he has, somehow," cried Bob. Bert dropped Patrick White, much ruffled as to fur and feelings, in Lissy's lap. Then they told all they knew about Billy.

"He was in the box when we came home at two o'clock," said Lissy, much excited. "Pet stopped to say good-by to him."

"Well, he wasn't at five, when Thomas and Bert and I went to get him," cried Bob. "And nobody knows where he is."

"He'll come back," said Miss Doris. "Cats always do."

"You don't suppose the side-show people —the ones with the trained cats and mice— saw him?" asked Lissy anxiously. "He was such a dear, cunning little cat."

Miss Doris shook her head.

"He'll come back," she said again.

It was nearly dark when Thomas stopped at The Penny Bank on his way to Overbrook. He had hunted the Fair Ground up and down and had asked ever so many people. But no one had seen anything of a fluffy gray kitten. And when Thomas came to look carefully at the box, which Bob had dropped on the ground, he found that one of its slats had been cleverly taken out and slipped back in again.

"Some one let him out," he said. "I knew all the time he couldn't get out by himself."

Everybody was talking excitedly about

what might have happened to Billy, when down the road from Overbrook came the sound of a motor-horn. In a minute a large beautiful car drew up and stopped before The Penny Bank. The Marjory girl's father sprang out.

"William Gray's lost-ed," cried Pet before any one else could say anything.

The Marjory girl's father didn't seem to hear. He was very white and stern.

"Is Marjory here?" he asked.

"Marjory?" cried three little Pennies, while Pet stared and Miss Doris slowly shook her head.

"We cannot find her at Overbrook," said Mr. Brook. "I thought there was just a chance she might have come here—to find her kitten—or for some reason."

"No," said Lissy slowly. "I've never even seen her, Mr. Brook." Mr. Brook

looked so grave and frightened, and the man in the car in the road looked so grave and frightened, that Lissy began to feel frightened herself. "But she'll be sure to come right back," she added hopefully. "The boys were always getting lost when they were little, but they always came back."

Mr. Brook looked down kindly at the little girl's eager face.

"Marjory has never been alone a minute in all her life," he said. "I've always feared I'd lose her. She went to the Fair this afternoon with Mrs. Brown, the nurse who's been with her ever since she was a baby. And the new little nurse, Nancy, went, too. Marjory had sent Nancy to buy three balloons. Mrs. Brown says she turned her head only a minute or two. But, when she looked back, the child wasn't in the car—wasn't in sight anywhere.

There was a great crowd there—to see the aviator. Some one has taken her. Some one has taken my little girl."

Of course there was reason to fear that some one had taken the little girl with the hope of getting a large reward for her return. Lissy didn't see that, but Miss Doris did. She knew that was what Mr. Brook feared had happened.

"How old is Marjory?" Miss Doris asked.

"Eleven," said Mr. Brook. "But she is very little and frail and easily frightened. Any one who cared to could have taken her."

"Oh, I don't believe any one would be so wicked as that," cried Lissy. She was so anxious to comfort Mr. Brook that she sprang to his side and caught one of his hands in both hers. "I think she just

strayed away, maybe, and before long you'll see her coming home."

Mr. Brook almost smiled at Lissy's eagerness.

"Will you come with me, my dear," he said, "and help me look for her? You know every one in Brookside, and I don't."

"Now—in the car?" cried Lissy.

"Yes."

"Oh, but the babies," cried Lissy. "And Father's supper—and everything."

"I'll stay," said Miss Doris promptly. "The boys will tell me how, and I'll look after every single thing. You go with Mr. Brook, Lissy."

"It won't take long to look through the town and the country-side," said Mr. Brook, "then, if we don't find her, I'll bring you back."

So, Lissy, feeling very important, went

with Mr. Brook in the big car up and down the streets of Brookside and up into the hills on all sides of the town. But nobody, anywhere, had seen anything of a little lost yellow-haired girl.

When at last Lissy and Mr. Brook turned homeward the early darkness was coming. Mr. Brook looked so broken-hearted that again Lissy slipped a warm little hand into his cold one.

"Maybe Marjory will be at home," she cried, "all safe and waiting for you."

Before they reached The Penny Bank Lissy could see Father standing out under the trees. She sat up straight and waved her hand. She tried to think just what you said when you introduced two very nice people to each other. She wanted to say just the right thing.

But, to Lissy's surprise, when the car

drew up, before she had time to say anything, Mr. Brook spoke.

"Good evening, Penny," he said, quite as if he had known Father for years.

"Good evening, Brook," said Father. But his voice wasn't the dear jolly voice Lissy loved so. It wasn't pleasant at all as he added, "I'll take my girl, if you don't mind."

"Oh, Father," cried Lissy, "he's just lost his own little girl for a little while. And he wanted somebody. So he borrowed me. You don't mind, do you, Father?"

Father didn't answer Lissy. He lifted her out of the car and held her close, as if she were still a very little Penny. But to the Marjory girl's father, he said: *"She's* mine—remember, Brook!"

It was all very strange. But Lissy didn't have much time to think about it, for all the

days that followed, were full of wonder and worry about the little lost Marjory girl. Hunt as they did, and advertise, and offer big rewards, nothing was heard of her. Mr. Brook shut himself up at Overbrook and would see no one. There were strange men in Brookside, whom Father said were detectives—men who made a business of looking into and straightening up strange happenings.

Nancy Spindle came sadly to The Penny Bank to say good-by.

"Seems as if everybody I know gets lost," she said.

"But they always get found again," cried Lissy happily.

"That's so," said Nancy.

She was going now, she said, to Miss Wren's, where the two Marties were. But just as soon as she could, she was going back

to the Barnard Home to stay with her blessed babies. She hugged Trixy and Pet, and went away, promising that when she came to Jane Wren's again she would make the little Pennies a visit, too.

It seemed to Pet that he and Patrick White were the only ones who remembered that poor William Gray was still lost, too. The three Penny boys had a meeting soon after the Fair. They gravely decided that of course, as they couldn't deliver the cat to Mr. Brook, the five dollars must be returned. So, as Father wouldn't hear of one of the Pennies going to Overbrook they sent the money by Thomas.

"It doesn't seem quite right to have a Thanksgiving dinner with poor little Marjory lost," said Lissy one night when Miss Doris had come to The Penny Bank to talk things over. "But it doesn't seem as right,

somehow, not to have one. We did give it up when Billy got lost and the money had to go back to Mr. Brook. But then John's box came with shoes for every one and coats for the boys and Trixy—"

"What did John send you?" asked Miss Doris. It seemed to her that Lissy never had anything.

"Money to buy whatever I wanted most," said Lissy, her voice quivering with joy. "He says I'm old enough now to buy my own things. Isn't that dear of John? Oh, I just wish you knew him, Miss Doris."

"What are you going to buy, dear?" said Miss Doris. She just ached to help Lissy spend John's gift in pretty comfortable things for her own neglected little self.

"It's a great secret," said Lissy. "But I'll tell you. I'm going to buy one of our own turkeys for our dinner—you know we

can never afford to save out one. Mrs. Greene, the grocer's wife, is going to buy it of Father for me. Isn't that fun? And then I'm going to buy just as many other things as I can to make a real Thanksgiving dinner. I've always wanted a real one."

When Miss Doris reached home that night she did something she had long been wanting to do. She sat down and wrote a letter to John Penny. She said she was the teacher in the Brookside school, and that she was quite sure it was wrong for his little sister Lissy to be kept out of school to look after a family. Lissy said there was no use to speak to her father, as he had more worries now than he could attend to. So, couldn't John Penny do something so that Lissy could begin school at once? Miss Doris knew John Penny's address by heart—

she had helped one or another of the little Pennies write it so often on letters at school. So she addressed the letter and mailed it.

The Thanksgiving dinner was a great success. Father was just as surprised and pleased as Lissy had known he would be. And he was his very dearest jolliest self and helped in all the stories and songs and games. And Miss Doris, who was one of the best parts of the party, decided that she had never seen a father who loved his children more, or who wanted to do more for their happiness.

Then, right in the midst of all the merriment, came a knock on the back door of The Penny Bank. And when the little Pennies all rushed to open the door there was Thomas with a big basket. And when the basket was unpacked there were all sorts of things which didn't often find their way into

The Penny Bank—nuts, candy, fruit, ice-cream, and dainty cakes. On top of the goodies was a large bunch of red carnations.

"For Lissy," was all that was on the card, except Mr. Brook's name.

The little Pennies joined hands and capered and danced about the basket. Even Lissy forgot that she was quite grown-up. She hugged her carnations, and danced, too. Then they began to eat. And, although they had eaten good-sized dinners before, they seemed to have room for plenty of everything the basket held.

But with the coming of the basket Father had grown quite silent.

"He's tired," Lissy said to the boys. "Don't make so much noise."

Somehow it seemed to Miss Doris that Mr. Penny did not like the Thanksgiving

basket from Overbrook. He would not spoil his children's good time by saying so. But he was not just pleased. Miss Doris couldn't help wondering why.

CHAPTER VI

MARJORY BEGINS TO SEE-SAW

NEVER before in all her little life had Marjory seen anything quite like that big bustling County Fair. But more than anything else on the whole ground she liked the Penny kittens. She made Ross, the chauffeur, stop the car in front of the box where they sat under their bright blue card.

"Isn't Billy the cunningest?" she said to Nancy Spindle, who sat with her in the tonneau. "I do wish I had him right here in the car with me this minute."

"He'd get away," said Nancy. She wasn't thinking much about William Gray, or Marjory, either, just then. She had

never been to a County Fair. Everything interested her. But, just now, she was craning her neck to see across the track where a tree-shaded enclosure was filled with cars, motor-cycles, wheels, carriages, and all sorts of vehicles.

"Do you see that old buggy over there and that fat, funny, white horse?" she said excitedly. Marjory did, standing on the seat, and craning her neck. "Those two dear children on the seat are my Martie Twins."

Of course Marjory had heard from Nancy all about the lost and found Marties. She didn't say anything. But a queer little lump came into her throat. She did not want Nancy Spindle to think any more of the Marties than she did of her—Marjory Brook. Nancy Spindle belonged to her, now.

"Oh, I must just run over there and speak to them, may I, please, Mrs. Brown?" cried Nancy. She leaned appealingly toward Mrs. Brown on the front seat with Ross. "I'll come right back."

"Of course," said Mrs. Brown, smiling at Nancy's eager face.

Marjory did not want Nancy to go. Then, too, she thought Nancy should have asked her permission—not Mrs. Brown's, who really belonged to her, too. They were both to do whatever she wanted—Daddy said so. But Marjory was really trying to be nice to Nancy Spindle—she wanted her to like her as much as she did the Marties.

"You may go," she said importantly to Nancy, already getting out of the car, "if you'll buy me three balloons—a blue one, a red one, and a green one."

"Three?" cried Nancy. She had never before been with any one who spent money as if it wasn't of any account, the way Marjory did. She couldn't get used to it.

"Three, Nancy Spindle," said Marjory.

Nancy Spindle took the purse and disappeared in the crowd. After some time Marjory saw her beside the open buggy, reaching up to hug the Marties.

"Nancy Spindle hasn't bought my balloons," cried Marjory.

"She will, dear, on her way back," said Mrs. Brown. "Look—the air-ship is really going up, this time."

Marjory didn't care anything about air-ships She had been with Daddy to see too many of them. It was hard work to watch Nancy with the Marties. She felt left out of things, and very sulky about it. She

turned her eyes to the gray and white Penny kittens. Patrick White was asleep, but William Gray sat up stiff and straight, the hair on his back raised a little as if he was frightened.

And back of the box Marjory's wondering eyes saw a boy's face which bobbed up and down, showing big brown freckles and a fringe of whitish hair.

"You bad little Penny boy," she cried. "You're trying to take my Billy."

No one heard Marjory's little voice in the noise everywhere. Then Marjory saw that the freckled boy wasn't either of the three Penny boys she had seen. And Nancy had told her there were only three. So he wasn't a Penny—good or bad. Marjory leaned forward in the car. The boy was hacking at the box with his knife. He loosened one of the slats—one end, then the

other. He took it out. He reached for the cat. But, somehow, he fumbled. And, in a second there was a flash of gray, and straight through the opening flew William Gray.

The boy clutched for him, missed, clutched again. Billy, frightened out of at least three of his nine lives, dashed straight for the Brook car. Almost as swift and quiet as the cat, herself, Marjory unfastened the door and slipped out after him.

It was not strange that no one saw her. For at that very minute, with a whir of wings, and a great upward sweep, the air-ship rose. Up, up, up, it went, every eye, almost, watching it. Even the freckled boy forgot the cat for a minute. Every one cheered and clapped, the bands played, and auto-horns everywhere swelled the chorus of noise.

Marjory did not see the air-ship. She was not conscious of seeing anything except that flying bit of a cat. It slipped under the car. She clutched at it and thought she had it. But she lost it. It flew under the car. She flew around. The gray fluff was just disappearing under another car. Marjory forgot all about the freckled boy. She flew after the cat. In and out of the crowd, which paid no attention to her, dodging trees and booths, she sped on. It was a long hard chase. And Marjory had never done anything like it before. But she would not give up. At last, a long way from the car and Mrs. Brown and Ross, she caught Billy.

She cuddled him up against her and tried to quiet him. With him clutched tight, she turned to go back to the car.

But now, instead of being carried along

with the crowd of men, women, and children, Marjory found she was going against it. It was not easy. She hadn't known before that there were so many people and horses and cars everywhere. She was bewildered and frightened, too, by the strange noises all about her—the blare of bands, voices shouting through megaphones, auto-drivers honking, and drivers of horses calling to her to get out of the way. Wherever she tried to go, Marjory found she was in some one's way, yet, all the time, no one seemed really to see her. Billy struggled and mewed. Marjory hid him as well as she could in her little coat, and hung on to him with both hands. Tired out at last, with being jostled and ordered out of the way, Marjory sank down on the ground under a tall tree. Maybe the car would come and find her there.

But the car did not come. All at once, it seemed to Marjory, that every one was hurrying home, or somewhere. Along with other teams from the enclosure, Marjory saw the funny high old buggy and the sleepy white horse Nancy had pointed out to her from the car. A man was driving. His wife and a baby were on the seat. And the Marties were crowded between and in front of them. They were all laughing and talking and having the jolliest time. Marjory tried to make them hear or see her. But they never glanced her way.

Just then, from the other side of the tree, a man came up to her.

"Lost, aren't you, little girl?" he said.

Marjory nodded. It was dreadful. But the thing she had heard talked about many times, when Daddy and Mrs. Brown did not know she even noticed or understood,

seemed to have happened to her. She was lost.

"I'll help you find your folks," said the man. He put out a big dirty hand.

All little Marjory's life kind people had done kind things for her. It was not strange that she went at once with the man.

"They're in a car," she said eagerly.

"What kind of a car?" asked the man just as eagerly.

"The new gray one," said Marjory. "And Ross wears a gray livery."

The man's eyes glanced at the little girl trotting along so trustingly at his side. She was plainly dressed, but she looked like a rich man's child—the kind for which big rewards were offered.

"That's a fine little cat," he said. "What's his name, now?"

"William Gray Penny," said Marjory.

She did not quite like this man. And Marjory never would talk to people she did not like. She decided not to tell him the cat's name was to be William Gray Brook.

"And what's yours?" said the man. "Something real pretty, I guess?"

"Marjory," said the little girl. She was searching eagerly everywhere for the big gray car. "If we can't find the car," she said timidly, "we might go to Overbrook—could you find that? It's on a hill—somewhere."

"We'll stop and ask the way," said the man.

Then Marjory saw that the part of the fair ground they were in was strange to her. There were few cars. The grass was worn off and trampled down. A big tent was being taken down. Big wagons with big horses harnessed to them, waited. Strange-

looking people stood about. Some of them were working. Most of them wrangled in loud unpleasant voices. A small tent was still standing. Out of this tent, came a woman. She was large and strong-looking, like Mrs. Brown. But she wasn't pretty and pink-cheeked and clean and sweet like Mrs. Brown. She came toward the man who still held one of Marjory's hands. They talked together. For a while Marjory didn't understand them.

"I don't like it," said the woman at last. She looked at Marjory, soberly. She took her hand away from the man's.

"Hal will," said the man. "It means big money, if it's managed right."

"It can't be managed right," said the woman. "And I don't like it."

"I want to go home," said Marjory. It seemed to her that the man and woman had

forgotten all about her. Billy mewed and clawed. Marjory's little hand was scratched and bleeding.

The woman lifted her in her strong arms.

"There, dearie," she said. "You come with Sue—you and the pretty kitty. Sue'll give you both something to eat."

"I don't want to eat," wailed Marjory, "I want to go home."

"Yes, dearie," said the woman again. She led Marjory toward the other woman. They all smiled at her and said she was a pretty child, and then they all went on with whatever they were doing. The big woman fed Billy some milk. She tried to have Marjory eat some bread and broth. But she wouldn't eat, and only said over and over, "I want to go home."

Sue took her in her arms, again, and told her she should go home in just a little while.

"'I WANT TO GO HOME'"

By and by, Marjory stopped crying and ate a little broth.

"Now, I'm ready," she said. She slipped her hand in Sue's. "Take me home, please!"

Instead, Marjory found herself put with two or three women, into a large wagon with a queer canvas top. The large woman climbed in after the others. Soon the wagon moved away from the empty fair ground, along a pretty country road.

"Are we going home now?" cried Marjory.

Sue reached down and patted her hand.

"Just cuddle down and sleep, dearie," she said. "You'll be home in a little while."

Marjory was glad to shut her tired eyes. With Billy asleep in her arms, she did go to sleep. She roused up, once or twice, to find the big wagon still moving along slowly in

the darkness. She cried, and Sue hushed her. By and by they all stopped and ate a noisy meal by the light of lanterns. Marjory had bread and milk.

She was so tired she fell asleep trying to eat. When she woke, it was morning. The big wagon had brought them to a strange town. A big tent was being raised. And Sue said, "Come to breakfast, Marj'ry."

"I want to go home," said little Marjory.

"Listen to me," said Sue. She took Marjory into her arms. "Just be a good quiet little girl and do as Hal and Dick and Sue tell you you should, and by and by you'll go home—you'll see, dearie!"

CHAPTER VII

SHE GOES DOWN, DOWN, DOWN

FOR a while Marjory was too dazed and frightened by all her new and strange experiences to understand what had happened to her. But, at last, she realized that she had, somehow, become a part of a company of people who called themselves a Gypsy Troupe. Marjory didn't know much about gypsies, and whether or not these people were real ones made little difference to her. There were Sue and her husband, Hal. There was Dick, the man who had found her on the Fair Ground. There were Rose and Fanny and several others whose names she

wasn't sure of. They went about the country, like real gypsies, stopping where Fairs were held. They put up tents, told fortunes, sang and danced. When Marjory fretted and grieved and cried for home Sue petted her and told her she would wake up and find herself back there some fine day. For a long time the little girl believed her, but, as she woke up, day after day, in the big wagon or the tent, she almost gave up ever seeing home again.

Everywhere she went, she was closely watched and guarded. Sometimes she wasn't allowed out of the tent at all.

After a while she began to find out that, somehow, she had proved a great disappointment to Dick and to Hal—maybe even to Sue. Sue was always kind to her. She cried over her often, and said that this was a hard life. Poor little Marjory thought

so, too, and cried herself. But when Hal was around she was afraid to cry or speak—she was almost afraid to breathe. He was a big, dark man, with a harsh voice and cruel eyes. He stormed at Sue and the others in quite a frightful way, Marjory thought. No one of the Troupe could suit him. And they all, even Sue, were afraid of him.

One night Marjory was supposed to be asleep in the small tent. Billy, as usual, was cuddled in her arms. If it hadn't been for Billy, Marjory was sure she couldn't have lived these days. Outside, Sue and Hal were talking. Hal was gruffer and angrier than usual. When Dick came up he spoke so plainly that even Marjory heard and understood.

"Why didn't you take a rich man's child if you wanted to make money out of her?" he snarled.

"Supposed I did," said Dick. "She looked it—and she talked about a car."

"Car?" scoffed Hal. "That child didn't come from no car. She's a Penny, and I've found out about that family. They are as poor as you'd expect people with such a name would be. There will be no reward offered for *her*. Worst of it is, the child is old enough and bright enough to know she's been taken. And we can't give her up without trouble."

Now, Marjory did not understand all this. She knew she wasn't a Penny, of course. They must think that was her name, because she had said Billy's name was William Gray Penny. She did belong to a rich father. And the car had been his. But she was too frightened to say anything even to Sue.

"That young un'll do something to earn

her keep," Hal went on, "or I'll know the reason why."

Marjory did not know what he was talking about now. "Earn her keep" meant nothing to her. Anyhow, she did not remember the words long. She could not seem to remember anything long—except that she was lost, and nobody seemed to care.

But the very next morning, when the big wagon stopped just outside a pretty little town, Sue came to her. Over her arm, she had a little ruffled white frock, a blue sash and blue shoes and stockings.

"Put these on, dearie, and see if you can dance a little," she said coaxingly. She cried as she slipped the little gown over Marjory's head. "They were my own baby's," she said. "She was just as big as you are when she died."

Sue fastened the little frock. Then she tied the blue sash and put on the blue stockings and shoes. When Marjory was dressed, she took her to show Hal.

"Cover up that yellow top-knot of hers," he said. "Gypsy kids don't have yellow hair, as a general thing."

From somewhere, Sue brought a dark curly wig. She put this over Marjory's yellow hair. She tied a blue ribbon on it. When she looked in the glass Marjory didn't know herself.

"Now, run to Rose," said Sue, kissing her, and wiping her eyes. "She'll show you some pretty little dance-steps."

"Oh, I can dance beautifully," cried Marjory with the first life she had shown since she became part of the Gypsy Troupe. "I can dance much better than Rose can."

Of course these strange people couldn't

know it, but Marjory had begun to dance almost as soon as she had begun to walk. Often, while still a tiny child, she had slipped away from Daddy's hand at the sound of a gay lilting-tune on a Victrola, or skipped about when she heard a street piano or a hurdy-gurdy. So she had been given the best of teachers. And now, when she chose, she could turn herself into a flying cloud or a hovering butterfly, or a rose-petal in the wind. And while she danced she always forgot everything else. To-day, when she danced for Sue and Rose and the others, she forgot for the time that she was lost and that she was afraid of Hal. She was quite happy. And every one was delighted with her and said so—even Hal grunted and did not scold.

It was Marjory, herself, who taught Billy to poise and balance daintily on her shoul-

der while she danced. He was so cunning that even Hal wrinkled up his cross face in what was probably meant to be a smile at sight of him.

At first, when Marjory knew she must go out and dance before noisy crowds of people she didn't like, she was frightened. But when she began to dance she forgot all about herself, and danced just because she loved it so. Such a storm of applause greeted the slender dark-eyed little gypsy-maid with her silken gray pussy-cat that she had to go out twice and dance all over again.

After this, Marjory and Billy had a place on every program. Marjory did not know it, but they more than "earned their keep."

Now that she had something to do, Marjory was not quite so unhappy with the Gypsy Troupe. She fed Billy. She washed and brushed and combed him till

his long silky fur shone like silver. She tied pretty bows around his neck to match her own hair-bows.

Meanwhile, the weather grew cool and bright with color. Red and golden leaves flitted down over the big wagon as it went along hill roads and through still valleys. At night, when they stopped to rest, big bonfires were lighted. Then, long rains began. The colors were washed away. The woods were dark and bare against the sky. The roads were rough and muddy. Finally the big wagons and tents were stored away for winter. The Gypsy Troupe stopped at cheap hotels and danced and sang in cheap halls in small towns and villages.

Marjory began to grow thin and weak and tired. She could scarcely dance. She became timid again and begged to go home. Hal talked often about folks who would

not work and would eat. Marjory did not understand, but she knew he was angry with her about something. Sue told him he needn't worry—Marjory did not eat anything, and she would not be with them long at this rate. Then Hal was angrier than ever.

Sue was always kind. She put Marjory in the best bed there was. She fed her hot milk and broth. She cried over her. Marjory cried, too. She couldn't always remember, now, how a cloud floated through the blue sky, or how a rose-petal fell, or how a bluebird skimmed the air. By and by she did not even ask to go home. She sat in a quiet sad little heap all day, with Billy in her arms. When they told her to dance, she tried to. But one night, when the room was very warm and the audience very noisy, she fainted away.

Hal stormed at her dreadfully. Sue cried. But Marjory didn't know or care. Billy nestled against her and purred and mewed. But she did not even hear him.

Next morning, maybe—anyway, some morning after she fainted—Marjory woke up. She felt weak but much better than she had. Sue was beside her bed. She was crying.

"It can't be much worse for me than it is now," she said, more to herself than to Marjory. "Hal can't treat me any worse. And if it's the last thing I do, I'm going to do it. Get up, dearie. Now, just you listen to Sue. If I was to dress you and feed you up good, and give you a bite to carry with you, and take you, myself, and put you on the right train with a ticket to the place you came from, could you get there—do you think?"

Marjory sat up suddenly.

"Home?" she cried.

"Home," said Sue, tears running down her face.

"Oh," cried Marjory, "oh, hurry, hurry, hurry!"

With hands that hurried and trembled and were wet with tears, Sue dressed Marjory. She put on the little old soiled clothes she had worn when she came into the Gypsy Troupe. Then she made the child eat—Marjory didn't know what. And then she put on her old coat and once dainty auto-hood. Over them, she wrapped a heavy shawl of her own and a thick green veil.

All the time she talked in half-frightened whispers, which Marjory scarcely heard at the time, but remembered afterward. She had always been kind, hadn't she? Mar-

jory must say, if she was asked and told the truth, that she had been treated well. Hal would blame her—Sue—dreadfully, but she did not care. Marjory would stay right on the train till she was home? She would know home when she saw it, wouldn't she? It was a dreadful thing to do to send such a little thing so far alone, but what else could she do? She scarcely dared do that. Marjory did not answer anything Sue said. She only said over and over, "Oh, hurry, hurry!"

"Now, we're all ready, dearie," whispered Sue, when the veil was tied.

"All but Billy," said Marjory. She drew her faithful little companion from the warm hollow of her bed where he had been snuggled.

Sue brought an old basket. Into this she put Billy. She fastened the cover.

Then Sue and Marjory and Billy went out of the shabby lodging-house. Billy mewed a little in his basket and had to be muffled under the old shawl. They went through a shabby little town of which Marjory never even knew the name. They came into a big station, where the lights were still on. Sue put Marjory—basket and all—on one of the seats, and bustled away to get a ticket.

Marjory was so weak and bewildered by what had happened and was still happening that she just sat still, too dazed even to look about her.

Then from somewhere, straight toward her, bounded a big handsome dog. He stood still a minute, sniffing the air suspiciously. Next minute he gave a quick yelp, dashed up to Marjory's seat, grabbed the basket, Billy and all, and was off with it.

"Oh, oh," screamed Marjory, startled out of her daze. She flew up, tripped in the folds of Sue's shawl, and would have fallen, but that a tall red-cheeked boy arrived from somewhere just in time to save her.

"Was it your basket, little girl?" he cried. "The rascal—what's in it?"

"Oh, Billy, Billy, Billy," wailed Marjory. "My dear little gray pussy. Oh, he'll be killed."

"Down, Fritz," cried the boy.

To Marjory's surprise, although he quivered from ear-tip to tail-tip and looked exactly like a naughty boy, the dog, over on the other side of the room, sat down, the basket still in his mouth. The next minute the boy crossed to him, rescued the basket, and brought it back—spits and growls coming from it in the fiercest, funniest fashion.

"Is he dead?" cried Marjory, clutching her precious basket.

"Not a bit of it," said the boy cheerily. "Just hear him inside there. He's a regular whirlwind of a cat—but good as new. Want to look?"

As well as she could for the green veil, which kept slipping over her eyes, Marjory looked into the basket. There sat a very much fluffed, very much huffed bit of a Billy.

"Cunning little beastie," said the boy.

"Marj'ry," cried Sue's anxious voice back of them, "your train's coming."

The boy gave Marjory the basket. Sue tied the cover again in place. She hurried Marjory away. On the way to the train she asked Marjory if she had told the boy anything about where she had been or where she was going. She seemed relieved when

Marjory said no. She kissed her several times, and Marjory felt tears on her face. She didn't quite know whether they were hers or Sue's. Then she was put aboard a train, which, almost at once, began to move. Marjory found that she and Billy were alone in a big red plush seat. Outside, the sun was just coming up over a broad flat country. She clutched the basket tight. And in a few minutes, her heavy head fell back and she was asleep.

Billy was mewing, when, a long time afterward, she woke up. People, up and down the aisle, looked at her curiously. Across the aisle, was a tall, red-cheeked boy who smiled at her. Marjory couldn't think where she'd seen him before. But she tried to smile back.

The boy came over and sat down beside

her. He let Billy out of his basket and held him gently in his arms.

"I didn't know you and Billy were going my way," he said. "Or that you were traveling all alone. Going far?"

"Home," said Marjory.

"Your ticket says Brookside," said the boy. "That's a long way. Don't you and Billy want something to eat?"

Then it came back to Marjory that this was the boy whose dog had run off with Billy.

"Where's the dog?" she asked, frightened again.

"Oh, he's in the baggage," laughed the boy. "I have to go and look after him every little while. He may take it into his head to get off somewhere without me. He's a funny runaway dog—Fritz is. What's your name, little girl?"

"Marjory," said Marjory.

Then it almost seemed to her that she went to sleep again. Only as a long troubled dream could she afterward remember that day. The boy brought her something to eat, once or twice. Her head ached. She only wanted to sleep. She almost forgot where she was going.

After a while she roused up again. The boy was standing in the aisle, talking to a young man and a woman in the seat ahead of her.

"If you're going to Brookside," he said, "just see that she gets off there. I can't find out much about her, except that she lives there. Her friends will probably meet her. This is my station."

Then the pleasant-faced boy spoke to her again.

"Good-by, Marjory and Billy," he said.

Then he added something that sounded like "A Merry Christmas!"

Billy mewed so piteously after that that Marjory had to rouse up a little and pet him. The lamps were lighted. After a long time, the train stopped. The young man ahead of her said, "This is Brookside, little girl—we'll get off here."

Outside the train there was snow—more snow than Marjory had ever seen put together in all her life. The young man spoke again.

"Where next, little girl?" he said.

"Home," said Marjory.

"No better place for Christmas Eve," laughed the young man. "But just about where is yours, child?"

"The poor little thing's too sleepy to know," said a motherly voice somewhere above her. Marjory reached out her hand

to one that came out of a muff toward her. "And her folks haven't met her? Dear, dear!"

"We'll just take her along with us, Aunt Melissa," said the young man. "Here's a hack. Lissy will know who she is. She knows every man, woman, child, and dog in Brookside!"

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTMAS COMES

THAT very Christmas Eve, when Marjory and Billy arrived so forlornly in Brookside, almost every one in the little town and from several miles around, was crowded in the schoolhouse, enjoying what Lissy Penny called "Miss Doris's Christmas Surprise."

It had begun one night after school, early in December. Bob Penny burst excitedly into the kitchen of The Penny Bank, followed more slowly by Bert.

"Miss Doris wants you, Lissy," cried Bob. "Down at the schoolhouse, now—this minute. She's waiting there."

"We'll look after Pet and Trixy," said Bert.

"Do hurry, Lissy," cried Bob.

"I'm just a-flying, Bob," laughed Lissy. "But I've got to look just the very best I can when I go to see Miss Doris. She's just like a flower, herself, every minute."

Miss Doris was waiting for Lissy in the window of the little schoolhouse, where the red geraniums were. She had on a soft new geranium-colored gown, with a dainty collar and a black velvet bow. Lissy wanted to kiss her. Miss Doris must have seen the want, for she kissed Lissy, not once, but twice.

"I have the loveliest plan, Lissy," she cried. Miss Doris was just like a little girl, herself, outside of school, and sometimes inside. "I wanted to keep it for a surprise for you, too. But it does so need you to

help work it out. So I'm going to tell you."

"Oh, goody!" cried Lissy. Her eyes shone. "It's so much nicer to surprise than to be surprised, Miss Doris."

Miss Doris and Lissy sat down together on one of the front seats. They talked and talked, until the room grew quite dark, and a big round moon smiled in at them. They talked in whispers quite as if there was somebody around somewhere with wide-open ears to hear all they said. And when Lissy ran home her eyes were bright and her cheeks almost as red as the bit of holly Miss Doris had given her.

She shook her head and smiled at the eager boys waiting for her in the old kitchen.

"It's Miss Doris's Christmas Surprise," she said. "She told me I might tell you that. But none of the other children are

even to know there is to be a Surprise. Just see how much she trusts you."

The days went along too slowly for the eager children, too fast for the eager grown-ups, just as days at Christmas always have a way of doing. The little town was so full of the Christmas spirit that you felt little tingles and thrills of it wherever you went. Everybody smiled happily, and almost said something, then remembered, said nothing, but went on smiling. Even Pet caught the Christmas must-give-somebody-something feeling. He decided there were two people to whom he must make Christmas gifts. One was Miss Doris! The other was poor lonely Mr. Brook, up at Overbrook, waiting for news of his little lost daughter.

Everything in The Penny Bank was looked over and talked over. Every spare penny was counted. It didn't take long to

count them—there were so few. Really there seemed nothing Pet could give, until a day or so before Christmas when a box came from John Penny. In it, were some beautiful ribbons for Lissy, quite dainty enough for Miss Doris, herself. Lissy did them up prettily, and smiled to think one of Pet's Christmas gifts was ready. As for the other—maybe she could find something later. Lissy never gave up hoping nice things were coming her way.

"If Father would only let me go and see him," said Lissy to Miss Doris, one night, as they worked at the Surprise. "But he won't—not even to thank him for that lovely Thanksgiving basket. It isn't a bit like Father."

The night before Christmas came, all stars and soft snowflakes and tinkling sleigh-bells, just as it should be. When school

was out, Miss Doris told everybody that they must come to the schoolhouse at seven that evening for a Christmas Surprise.

And when the children rushed into their homes to tell the good news the Surprise began. For they found that fathers and mothers and big brothers and sisters had known all about it for weeks, and that they were all invited to the schoolhouse, too.

At seven o'clock, when they all crowded into the schoolhouse, there, where Miss Doris's desk usually stood, was the Surprise, itself—or the loveliest part of it—a tall, beautiful Christmas Tree. It was glittering with balls and tinsel and the little colored bells and chains and stockings and gifts they had made themselves. And bundles of all sorts were heaped up under it. The air was just full of its fragrance and

light and good cheer. Miss Doris stood up by the Christmas Tree and told everybody how she and Lissy had been all over town and asked everybody to do a little something toward the Surprise, and how everybody had been glad to. Then she asked some of the children to say some of the little Christmas verses they had been saying in school all the month, and to sing some of the songs, and to play some of the plays. And they finished up with a little Christmas Thank You, which they had learned, not knowing when it was to be used. Then, when even Lissy supposed the Surprise was about over, there came some more of it.

While some of the grown-ups lighted the little Tree, several of the boys brought in a big hamper full of gifts, with gifts tied to its handles which dragged and dangled in

the most fascinating way. And then it came out that Mr. Brook, up in his empty home, had heard about the Surprise, too, and had sent a gift for every little boy and girl in Brookside in the name of little lost Marjory.

The candles on the Tree danced and twinkled and sputtered over with joy. And the children bubbled over, too, and there were more songs and a great deal of Merry Christmasing. Then little folks and big folks, all laden with gifts and good will, started home through the soft Christmas snow.

Miss Doris went with the Pennys. She had accepted Lissy's invitation to spend Christmas in The Penny Bank. Lissy drew Trixy along on one of the new sleds. Once Trixy fell off and had to be put back on. Father carried Pet, who was more

than half asleep. And Bob and Bert were everywhere frolicking in the snow.

When they came in sight of The Penny Bank there was a bright light in the kitchen windows.

"Why, who can be there?" cried Lissy. "Almost everybody was at the Surprise—except poor Mr. Brook."

They all guessed and wondered and hurried along as fast as they could. And when they poured into the kitchen they saw at once, that for them, the Christmas Surprises had only just begun.

In the big rocker before the stove sat a big, comfy, grandmotherly sort of person. In her arms was a child sound asleep. And cutting bread to make toast was a tall young man. As the surprised Pennys all stopped just inside the room he came forward, laughing and holding out both hands.

"A bad Penny," he said, "always returns —some time. Why, Father—Lissv—don't you know me?"

"John!" cried Father, his free arm going up over the tall young man's shoulder.

The next minute Lissy and Trixy, who was, as usual, in her arms, were both gathered up into the tall young man's arms. And Bob and Bert and Pet were hanging to him. And everybody was crying "John! John! John!"

"Who's this extra girl?" cried John, freeing himself at last from his small brothers, and turning—Lissy and Trixy still in his arms—toward Miss Doris. "Is she a Penny, too?"

"Oh, I wish she was," cried Lissy. "She's Miss Doris Dean, our new schoolteacher. And oh, Miss Doris—this is John!"

"So I thought," said Miss Doris, with all her dimples out. "I'm glad you've come, Mr. Penny."

"Well, if you're all through welcoming John Penny, suppose you say a word or so to your great-aunt Melissa," said the pleasant-faced woman in the rocking-chair.

"I've been far enough to find her," said John Penny. He put Lissy down, and went across to Aunt Melissa. "But now she's found and here, she'll stay found and here. And, Miss Dean, Lissy is going to school just as soon as she can get there."

Everybody laughed to see Aunt Melissa throw both arms around Father and hug him quite as if he was a boy.

"I brought him up," she cried, "from the time he was as big as that smallest boy there. Why shouldn't I hug him?"

While all the little Pennys were shyly

getting acquainted with their new great-aunt, and John Penny was explaining how he remembered that she lived way up in New Hampshire somewhere, and had looked her up and found her alone and ready to come to The Penny Bank to live, Miss Doris stole a look at the sleeping child whom Aunt Melissa had laid on the old lounge.

She was a beautiful little thing with a tiny flower face framed in golden hair. Her hands and feet were small and dainty. But her clothes were old and soiled and her shoes quite worn out.

Sleeping cozily in a ball beside her, was a small gray cat. As Miss Doris bent above the child, the cat uncurled itself, stretched, and sprang to the floor.

There was a shout of joy from Pet, who was never far from Miss Doris, if he could

help it. The next minute he had the small gray cat in his arms.

"Billy's come back!" he cried. "Billy's come back!"

At the name the little girl stirred.

"Billy," she said. She struggled to her feet out of the shawl wrapped about her. She pushed back a lock of yellow hair. Her eyes were dark and startled.

"Where is Billy?" she cried.

Every one turned to look at the little thing.

"Whose child is this, Peter?" began Aunt Melissa. "She got off the train here, and said she wanted to go home. But there was no one to meet her—so we brought her with us."

"I knew Lissy'd know her," said John.

Lissy, looking puzzled enough, was slowly shaking her head. Then, Pet, paus-

"'WHY, IT'S THE MARJORY GIRL — IT'S THE MARJORY GIRL!'"

ing with William Gray in his arms, and Bert and Bob, one on each side of him, all cried at once,—

"Oh, oh, oh! Why, it's the Marjory girl—it's the Marjory girl!"

CHAPTER IX

AND SHE COMES UP, UP, UP AGAIN

IT was Father, himself, who picked up the Marjory girl and headed the procession that started to Overbrook. Lissy held fast to one of his hands. Pet held fast to one of Lissy's. Back of them, pranced Bob and Bert. Last of all, came Miss Doris and John Penny. Aunt Melissa had stayed at home to put Trixy to bed.

No one asked the Marjory girl any questions. She was so tired and white and her big dark eyes looked so piteous and frightened. Lissy dropped Father's hand long enough to pat hers gently.

"It's all over now," she said, "whatever

it was. Let's think how glad every one is."

And right at that minute a beautiful plan hopped into Lissy's head. In half-whispers she told it to Father.

For a wonder Father didn't say anything against this plan, even though it had to do with Mr. Brook. So while all the others waited breathlessly in the beautiful hall at Overbrook, Pet and the Marjory girl went, hand in hand, to the door of the library, where the startled servant said Mr. Brook was. They knocked, but they did not wait for an answer. Pet pushed open the door.

"Merry Christmas, Mr. Brook," he called. "I've bring-ed you a love-ly pres-ent!"

Then the Marjory girl caught sight of a desolate figure before the fire, and darted across the room.

"Oh, Daddy! My Daddy!" she cried.

"Margie-girl!"

Lissy pulled Pet away from the door and shut it softly. Then all the Pennys, little and big, and Miss Doris, went back down the hill to The Penny Bank.

It was New Year's Day and the last of John's vacation. There had never before been such a short week—of that Lissy was quite sure.

A big bright fire was burning in the old fire-place in the parlor. John had discovered that there was one there boarded up. He had uncovered it and cleaned it all out, and it was his New Year's gift to the family. Aunt Melissa was his Christmas gift. The fire made a new place of the big, rather bare room. Miss Doris and all the little Pennys were sitting in its cheery blaze, so happy they did not suppose they could be any happier. Then there was the brisk

jingle of sleigh-bells coming down the hill. And stopping before The Penny Bank, was the big Brook sleigh, piled high with fur robes, and with two prancing horses tossing pretty proud heads and pawing at the snow.

Mr. Brook stepped from the sleigh and lifted out Marjory. She wore a gray fur coat, a gray fur hat with a long feather, and gray gloves. She carried a fluffy gray muff. Just at first Pet thought it was William Gray himself.

"We've come to thank the Pennys," said Mr. Brook, as they came into the bright warm parlor, "for all they've done for us. We don't know just how to do it."

Mr. Brook's voice was so half glad and half sad that Lissy reached right up and patted his coat.

"We didn't do a thing except bring her home," she cried. "But if we had done all

we wanted to, just looking at her, now, is thanks enough." Lissy smiled happily at every one.

Miss Doris was taking off Marjory's hat and coat. She wore a little thin white frock. Her yellow hair fluffed out prettily from the blue band which did its best to hold it in place. But she was so little and frail and pale and timid looking—it made your heart ache to see her in the midst of all the round rosy happy Pennys. She had such a frightened little way of staying close to her father, too, you wanted to take her right into your arms and comfort her.

"Margie's had a very sorry time of it," said Marjory's father. He drew his little daughter to a seat beside him on the sofa. "She's been ill ever since she came home. I've had two doctors here from the city to see her. Both say she must forget every-

thing that's happened, and do all the happy things she can think of. We're going to tell you Pennys all about everything, because we think you ought to know. And then we're both going to forget it, aren't we, Margie-girl?"

"If I can," said Marjory.

Then, between them, Mr. Brook and Marjory told the story of the last three months. Some things that Marjory had not understood, Mr. Brook made plain. They began with the day at the Fair and Billy's getting lost. Marjory told how she lost herself, trying to capture Billy. Then she told about her strange life with the Gypsy Troupe, how she had lived in wagons and tents a while and then in cheap hotels, and of how she had danced. She tried to tell, then, of the long railway journey. There had been a nice boy in it, at the beginning,

she said, and a dog who had run off with Billy, but who hadn't hurt him. But she did not remember what had become of them.

"He was a fine boy," said John Penny. "He was the one who asked Aunt Melissa and me to keep an eye on you, you know, Marjory. I kept one, and Aunt Melissa, two—and that's how you came here with us, you know."

"Of course these people had no idea who Marjory really was," said Marjory's father, his arm close around his little girl, as if he feared losing her again. "If they read the papers at all, they didn't see that Marjory Brook of New York was Marjory Penny of Brookside. You see, Marjory let them think her name was Penny at first, and then did not dare tell them differently. And I made a grave mistake in using my New York address. But while every one knows

my home there, few know of Overbrook. I had sent Marjory here, partly for greater safety. For I have always feared she would be taken from me, to be returned only when a big reward was offered. I supposed, of course, this was what had happened, and that by using my best-known address I would get her back sooner."

Every one was looking solemn enough, when Lissy laughed softly.

"Did you ever see-saw, Marjory?" she asked.

"No," said Marjory. "I don't know anything about such common plays, Melissa Penny."

"Well, it's the most fun, if it is common," said Lissy stoutly. "You put a board over a saw-horse."

"What's a saw-horse?" said Marjory scornfully.

"There's an old one out by the barn," said Bob. "You can see it from the kitchen window, can't she, Lissy?"

"Show it to me," commanded Marjory.

Bob and Lissy and Marjory went to see the saw-horse. When they came back Lissy was talking eagerly.

"You put a board across it, you know, Marjory. Then you get on one end of the board and some one gets on the other and you see-saw—one end goes up, then down, then up—"

Lissy paused, her cheeks quite scarlet from so much see-sawing.

"Well?" said Marjory impatiently. "What of it?"

"Well," said Lissy, her cheeks staying scarlet, because all the grown-ups had stopped talking to listen to her, "that's what you've done—hasn't she, Miss Doris?

Only, of course, not on a real see-saw board. First, you were way up high—that's before you were lost. Then you went way down—thumpity-thump! That's when you were with the gypsies. And now you're way up again. If only your name was Daw!"

"Daw?" cried Marjory. "It isn't half as pretty as Brook."

"But, you see," cried Lissy, "if your name *was* Daw, you would be like the Mother Goose Marjory—"

"'See, Saw, Marjory Daw'

don't you remember?"

"That's in my book of Nursery Rhymes," said Marjory. "But I don't think it's like me, is it, Daddy?"

"A little, dear," said the Marjory-girl's father. He smiled at Lissy.

Lissy smiled back.

"There's another verse in the book about

'Up, up, up, and down, down, downy.' That's like you, too," she said. "Everything about you seems like a story-book girl to me, somehow. If I'd been lost like you, I'd just play it was a story—and not think about how dreadful it really was."

"It would not have happened to you," said Marjory gravely. "Because you're not rich and haven't pretty clothes and cannot dance."

"Well, I'm glad of it, then," laughed Lissy good-naturedly. "But, if it had happened to me, I would play it was a story."

"I wish Margie had some one like Lissy with her all the time," said Mr. Brook to Miss Doris. "She needs younger company. She wants Nancy Spindle back again. But Nancy Spindle, at the other end of the telephone, yesterday, says it is the croupy time of year, now, and she just can't leave her blessed babies."

Every one laughed at that. And Lissy and Pet slipped out of the room.

"They'll be back in a minute," said Bob. "Lissy's gone to get something. I know what, but I can't tell."

"Marjory's an impolite little thing," said John Penny to Miss Doris, in an undertone, while the others talked about Nancy Spindle and her babies.

"She can't help it," said Miss Doris. "She doesn't know any better. She's always had everything her own way till this happened. It may prove the making of her, with Lissy's help—that blessed child."

Miss Doris turned to smile at Lissy coming back with Pet. In his arms was Billy.

Pet ran straight to Marjory.

"Wish you a Happy New Year," he cried. He dropped Billy in her lap. "You can have him for nothing this time."

"May I really?" cried Marjory. Her sad little face brightened. She cuddled Billy up under her pretty pointed chin.

"May I, Daddy, for my very own?" she asked.

"Of course," cried Lissy. "You got lost running after him. And you took care of him all the time you were gone. And you brought him all the way home. I'm sure Billy belongs to you, Margie."

"Margie has tried ever since she got home to make me buy Billy for her," said Marjory's father. "But I thought best not to. She has so much—and you—"

Lissy laughed.

"You mean," she cried, "we have so much, and Margie so little. That's what you meant to say, Mr. Brook, wasn't it?"

CHAPTER X

TWO LITTLE MARTHA WASHINGTONS

PERHAPS no little girl ever began school more happily than Lissy. She was full of plans, and found out dear, quiet little ways of helping everybody. After she had been in school for a week Miss Doris wondered how she ever taught without her.

Lissy studied and tried her best to have perfect lessons. But, somehow, she had been out of school so long this was not easy. Although Miss Doris helped her out of school, Lissy could not get the perfect marks she so longed for. It was all she could do to keep up with her class.

"Miss Doris says it will be easier by and

by," Lissy told Aunt Melissa. "But I'm really afraid I'm always going to be stupid." Lissy was as discouraged as so plucky a little girl could be.

"I don't believe there are any of the others who can bake bread and pies and cake, and cook, and sew, and do all the things you can, Lissy," Aunt Melissa said. "Wait a little—you'll get on better, just as Miss Doris says."

Just one thing beside her lessons troubled Lissy. Even after the visit of Marjory and Mr. Brook at The Penny Bank, and after several invitations to Overbrook, still Father would not let any of the little Pennys go there. Lissy had given up asking why. But she couldn't help wondering.

One Saturday morning, just a few days before Washington's Birthday, a servant from Overbrook came to The Penny Bank.

He carried a number of small letters. Five of them he gave to Lissy. There was one addressed to her, and one to each of the boys. And each one of these said:

MISS MARJORY BROOK
AT HOME
ON WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY
FROM FOUR TILL EIGHT

The fifth letter was for Master Robert Penny. And it was written by Marjory, herself.

"I am going to be a little Martha Washington at the party," she said, "and I want you to be a little George. Daddy has sent to New York for suits for us both. As soon as they come, I will send yours to you. You must all be sure to come, this time, for I can't have any party without you."

"Isn't that lovely?" cried Lissy. "Just

think, Bob—a real George and Martha party—and you in a real little George suit. Won't Marjory be the sweetest little Martha? Oh, I do wish Father would come so I could tell him! Suddenly, Lissy's face grew sober. "Do you suppose, Aunt Melissa," she said gravely, "that Father will say we can't go this time?"

"I suppose—*not!*" said Aunt Melissa grimly. "You leave Peter Penny to me, Lissy. I'll manage him."

Lissy never knew how Aunt Melissa managed—but, for this once, Father said they might all go to Overbrook. The Penny Bank was so full of joy at the very thought that much of the gladness spilled over and could be heard on all sides in gay laughs and shouts.

Of course Miss Doris was invited to the party. By this time Miss Doris was a part

of all the glad things and most of the sad things that happened in Brookside. It was she who suggested that, as a surprise to George and Martha, each little guest should wear some pretty touch of Colonial costume. All the mothers and aunts and big sisters agreed and helped—Miss Doris was one of those delightful persons whom every one always wanted to help.

Lissy was wild with joy—any kind of dress-up and make-believe delighted her. She and Miss Doris and Aunt Melissa ransacked the old attic of The Penny Bank. 'Way back in a forgotten corner, they came across a dusty, cobwebby old chest. And when Aunt Melissa had dusted and dusted, and Miss Doris had turned a rusty key in a rusty lock, the chest was found to be full of old gowns, ribbons, bonnets, and even shoes.

"They must have belonged to your mother's folks, Lissy," said Aunt Melissa. "She was a lovely little thing—your own mother. She had big dark eyes and the most beautiful golden hair I ever saw. And she had the prettiest hands and feet, and always wore dainty things."

"Is there any reason why Lissy shouldn't have these things?" asked Miss Doris, looking up eagerly from the chest. In her hands was a string of coral beads, with a golden clasp, marked M.

"None whatever," said Aunt Melissa. "That M on there was for Margaret—that was her name, you know, Lissy. I never knew there were any such things here. We'll get some one to come right in and make Lissy some new dresses."

"Oh, let me—please!" cried Miss Doris. "I can make dresses—I make my own.

And I'd just love to dress up Lissy."

Out of some pretty blue and white flowered stuff Miss Doris made a little Colonial gown for Lissy to wear to the party. Some old lace made dainty undersleeves. She wore her hair high on her head. It was powdered lightly and held in place by a silver comb. She had high-heeled strap-slippers, and she carried a fan.

The other little Pennys were made as gay and old-timesy as possible. Bob was a perfect little George Washington—plum-colored satin suit, buff waistcoat, stock, ruffles, braided hair tied with a black bow, slippers with big buckles, silken socks, pointed hat, sword, and all. He made himself as tall as he possibly could. Even on his tiptoes, Martha must still be a little taller. But he was big of his age, and she was small. And when he marched up to

her, just as Miss Doris had told him, hand on heart, with a low bow, every one clapped their hands. And when Martha, in the richest and daintiest of court costumes of soft gold color, swept him a courtesy and took his arm, every one clapped again harder than ever.

Mr. Brook, himself, and Marjory's nurse, and Miss Doris helped in the games. They played all the old fashioned things they could think of—the needle's eye, hunt the slipper, ring around a rosy, and drop the handkerchief. There were prizes given for different things—little flags, bunches of cherries, tiny hatchets, and all sorts of pretty things that didn't often find their way to Brookside.

And Marjory danced for them—first, some old-fashioned dances, such as, maybe, the real Martha Washington danced; and

then, a pretty little new one, with Billy balancing daintily on her shoulder.

After a wonderful supper, every one danced—Martha and George leading. Mr. Brook danced with Lissy. And Pet danced with Miss Doris.

Then Mr. Brook said he was so pleased with all the costumes he had decided to give a prize for the best. Some friends of his who were staying at Overbrook, were appointed judges. It did not take them long to select the two best ones among the girls'—Marjory's and Lissy's.

"Lissy's, of course," Mr. Brook said to Miss Doris. "Hers is home-made. Marjory's came straight from a costumer's in New York."

"Yes," said Miss Doris absently. Mr. Brook went to speak to the judges. Miss Doris stood where he left her. She stared

fascinated at the two little girls, who, side by side, walked up and down to show off their costumes.

Lissy was taller than Marjory, and not quite so fairy-like. Her hair was darker and redder. Her eyes were gray—not brown. Her cheeks were round and rosy. Marjory's face was pale and pointed. Her eyes were dark. Her hair was like a golden cloud. She was slender and every move she made was graceful and bird-like. She carried her little head proudly. Her mouth wasn't so sweet and kissable as Lissy's. But for one brief minute it seemed to Miss Doris that they looked alike. Rich, well-cared-for Marjory Brook looked like poor, neglected, hard-working Lissy Penny. Miss Doris looked again—but all in a minute the resemblance was gone. Lissy's face had suddenly flashed into the

brightest smiles all set with dimples. Marjory's face had grown sullen and her mouth drooped discontentedly.

The prize had been given—and given to Lissy. And it was a shining five-dollar gold piece.

Lissy came flying to Miss Doris.

"Oh, just see!" she cried. She held out the coin. "They gave it to me. But it's almost all yours—'cause you made the costume, Miss Doris, and thought it out, and everything."

"I'm going to fix the dear little thing so she'll be just as pretty as Marjory all the time," thought Miss Doris. "She's much sweeter now."

Then, a strange thing happened. Marjory had been standing—a sulky little Martha among her guests. She had expected the prize, of course. That was not strange,

because everything did come to her that she wanted. And her eyes were fixed enviously on Lissy as she sped to Miss Doris. She watched her for a minute. Suddenly, her face brightened. Like a yellow bird, she darted across the room. She slipped her arm around Lissy.

"Oh, I'm glad," she cried. "Or I'm going to be, I think, in just a minute—that you have it instead of me. You do look so happy. And, please, won't you like me just the way you do Miss Doris, Lissy?"

Lissy did not hesitate. She threw both arms around Marjory's neck and kissed her.

"Why, I've always liked you," she cried. "But I'd just love to love you, and, if you'll let me, I'm going to begin this very minute!"

CHAPTER XI

MARJORY BEGINS SCHOOL

WASHINGTON'S Birthday came on Friday. Saturday, Miss Doris, Aunt Melissa, and Lissy, herself, made a whole new gown for Lissy. It was made of some soft dark-blue wool stuff which Miss Doris had found in the wonderful chest in the attic. It was just as much like the one in the big fashion-book as possible.

Monday, Lissy wore the new gown and a lovely red ribbon on her hair. She was fond of bright, pretty colors.

"And the very best thing about it all is," she whispered to Miss Doris, just after school had begun, "it is made out of some-

thing my own Mother wore once." Lissy's face was like a sunbeam.

Just then the outside door of the room opened quietly. There, pale and a little timid, but bright-eyed and eager—her maid just back of her—stood Marjory.

"Daddy says I may try coming to school, Miss Doris," she said. "I've teased him ever since my party. And oh, please, may I sit with Lissy Penny?"

Miss Doris smiled and nodded. She smiled all the time Annette told her just what Miss Marjory could and couldn't do. She said, "Yes" and "Thank you" in just her sweetest way. And when Annette had gone, after coming back once to tell Miss Marjory to be very careful about not taking cold, Miss Doris put her arm around the little girl and brought her to Lissy's seat and told her how very glad she was that her

father had let her try coming to school.

Lissy was so excited that she could not get any more lessons all that morning, and forgot the ones she thought she had learned. She failed so helplessly in everything and was so distressed over each failure that Miss Doris only said: "Never mind, Lissy, dear. You'll do better to-morrow!" and wondered for the hundredth time what she could do to help the poor child along.

Marjory proved a surprise to every one, even Miss Doris. After the first strangeness wore off, and she began to understand what she was expected to do—and that she was expected to do it for herself—she had almost perfect lessons.

"But I've had all that before," she would say in smiling wonder at the wonder of the others. "You see, Daddy told me all about that."

She was so far ahead of all Miss Doris's little classes that Miss Doris thought best to make a visit to Overbrook, and tell Mr. Brook all about it. But Mr. Brook only smiled.

"I'm not sending her to school for what books will teach her," he said, "but for what she'll learn from being with you, Miss Dean, and that wonderful child, Melissa Maud Penny."

"Lissy is wonderful," said Miss Doris. " If only they could be together for awhile your Marjory would be happier and stronger in every way."

"I know," said Mr. Brook. "But Lissy's father won't allow her to come to Overbrook even for a short visit."

"Why not let Marjory go there?" Miss Doris queried.

"She would have to take care of herself,"

said Mr. Brook, "and do without many comforts. I—"

"Just what she needs," said little Miss Doris pluckily. "You just try it and see."

So it happened that one day, not long after Miss Doris's visit to Overbrook, when Lissy begged Marjory to come and make her a visit over Saturday and Sunday, and when Marjory begged her father to be allowed to, just this once, he said she might.

Friday evening, with Annette, Marjory arrived at The Penny Bank. Lissy met them with a very sober face.

"I'm so sorry," she said, "and it doesn't seem quite polite. But we've only just beds enough to hold you, Marjory. The front rooms are cold this time of year. Aunt Melissa doesn't think any one ought to sleep in them, and—"

"I'm not to stay," said Annette quickly.

"Mr. Brook says so, Miss Lissy. He says Miss Marjory must just do for herself—I'm sure I don't know how she'll manage."

"Oh, I'll help her," cried Lissy. And as the maid set down Marjory's suit-case and went down the steps, Lissy caught Marjory around her waist and danced up and down the hall with her. "We'll have the best time ever," she cried breathlessly. "Aunt Melissa is going to take Trixy in with her, and you and I will sleep together."

It was almost the best time Marjory had ever had. Going to bed with another little girl in the little room was a new experience, as delightful as it was strange. Lissy helped with buttons. She helped comb out Marjory's hair, exclaiming at its golden fluffiness.

Getting up, early next morning, scrubbing in cold water, and eating breakfast

with a tableful of hungry, happy little folks was fun, too.

"I'm going to get up early and eat breakfast with Daddy, every single time he's home," cried Marjory. "Why, it tastes ever so much better at this time of day and when you're not all alone."

After breakfast everybody was so busy Marjory wanted something to do, too. So she learned how to wipe dishes while Lissy washed them. The dishes done, she asked eagerly to help Aunt Melissa roll out cookies. She learned things very quickly. She worked so hard that she was very hungry at dinner-time—to Marjory's surprise dinner came in the middle of the day at The Penny Bank. In the afternoon she and Lissy and the Penny boys went out into the meadow and slid down hill on the crust.

When she came in late in the afternoon

Lissy's father had come. For a minute he thought she was Lissy.

"Your cheeks are so red," he said, smiling at the new little girl. "I never saw them red before, you know."

Marjory ran to a mirror to see how she looked with red cheeks. And it was an improvement, she decided.

Whatever was the reason Father wouldn't let the little Pennys go to Overbrook, Lissy knew it wasn't that he didn't like Marjory. From that very first night, when he had carried her to Overbrook, he had seemed interested in her. And now he seemed pleased to have her in The Penny Bank. And Marjory thought Lissy's father was almost as nice as Daddy. She sat down near him by the fire while he read his paper. Once in a while he smiled at her over the top of the sheet. By and by, he

laid it down and took her up in his arms, and said gently that she was a dear little girl and must come to see his little folks just as often as she could.

Marjory went home Sunday night. And when she came to school Monday morning she was all alone.

"I want to be as much like Lissy as I can," she said wistfully to Miss Doris. "And she does everything for herself and almost everything for everybody else. Don't you just love her, Miss Doris?"

"No one could help loving Lissy," said Miss Doris.

"I wish I could do something for her," cried Marjory. Perhaps it was the first time Marjory had ever even thought that she would like to do something for somebody beside Marjory Brook. "But I've thought and thought and seems to me there

isn't one single thing Lissy can't do for herself. Can you think of anything?"

A sudden happy thought flashed into Miss Doris's little brown head.

"Oh, yes, dear," she replied. "If you will only help Lissy with her lessons. They are so easy for you and so hard for her. And she tries so hard. Help her every night, Margie!"

So, as the days grew longer, for a while every evening Marjory helped Lissy with her lessons. She was so glad to think she had found something to do for Lissy. And she had the dearest little ways of telling things, and made things that had been so hard so easy to see and remember that Lissy began to have good lessons almost every day. In return for the lessons Lissy taught Marjory to bake and sew a little and do all sorts of useful things—the kind of which

Lissy's life had always been full to overflowing. And Marjory, almost always busy and happy now, with a bit of life at The Penny Bank nearly every day, slowly began to seem like a new and different Marjory. Her eyes grew bright. Sometimes they danced and twinkled at you almost as gayly as Lissy's did.

One day Miss Doris was at Overbrook for a little visit with Marjory. Marjory's maid brought one of the little girl's spring gowns to show Miss Doris. It was so pretty—white with blue violets scattered over it and a black velvet sash.

"Would you care, Margie," asked Miss Doris, "if I should make one for Lissy like it? There's some rosebud stuff in the old chest which would be lovely."

"Oh, I'd love it," cried Marjory, as pleased as even Lissy herself would have

been. "I'd like Lissy always to have things like mine. And there's plenty more of the velvet, and I'll make the bows—that's one thing I can make better than Lissy."

The warm days came early that year. One lovely Saturday, which it seemed March must have borrowed from April, Marjory and Lissy and Miss Doris went for a long walk. Both little girls wore their new gowns.

It was hard to tell which one was happier. Miss Doris thought it was a pity to let so much happiness go by. So, just outside The Penny Bank, she took their pictures standing side by side.

The picture turned out to be so good that Lissy sent it in a long letter to John. She told him how Miss Doris had made the gown and taken the picture, and how she was the loveliest girl in the world anyhow,

and how he just must come before the summer vacation took her away from Brookside so that they could all have one more good time all together.

John Penny wrote Lissy a long letter and told her how much he wanted to come, but how he was afraid he couldn't. And he wrote another to Miss Doris herself. It was even longer than Lissy's. When Miss Doris had finished reading it she took her picture of Lissy and Marjory, standing side by side, and looked at it a long, long time.

"How strange," she said to herself.

CHAPTER XII

APRIL WEATHER

BUT Marjory was not the only little girl who was happy these days. Lissy's eyes were like stars all the time, and she sang and laughed and danced through each day almost as happily as April in her happiest weather. For, with Marjory's help, she was beginning to have perfect marks at school.

One noon Miss Doris called her to her desk, as she was going out, to tell her how well she was doing.

"And Marjory hasn't helped me a bit for almost a week," cried Lissy. "You see, she's showed me how to study, and now I

can do it all by myself. Oh, how I wish I could do something for Marjory."

"You've taught Marjory just as much as she has you, dear," said Miss Doris.

"Not big, beautiful things, Miss Doris, the kind you find in books."

"Maybe not," said Miss Doris; "but you've taught her how to be happy and busy, and being happy and busy are making her well and strong. And health and work and happiness are the biggest and best and most beautiful things I know of, Lissy."

"She's coming to spend all of the Easter vacation at The Penny Bank," cried Lissy. "You'll come every day, too, won't you, Miss Doris? Aunt Melissa and I are thinking up the loveliest things to do, but it'll need you to really do them."

Miss Doris was almost as much pleased as Lissy at the thought of the good times.

You could have the best of times in The Penny Bank. Every one who ever went there found that out. As for Marjory, she had a calendar by her bed, and each night she marked off one more day, and counted anxiously how many were left before the Easter vacation would begin.

Mr. Brook had been away some weeks on a business trip. It was when there were only three days more to be marked off on Marjory's calendar that a long letter came from him to Marjory. The letter said he would be back in New York for Easter, and that he wanted his little girl to spend it with him there in their big, beautiful home. He could not be away from the city just then, he said, and neither did he want to stay there all alone. So he should look for her and Mrs. Brown and Annette on the day before Easter. He was glad she was

so much better and stronger, and he sent his love to all the little Pennys—especially to Lissy.

"But of course, I can't go," said Marjory, as she told Lissy about the letter on their way to school. "Because that's the week I'm going to spend in The Penny Bank. I'm going to write Daddy so to-night."

"Hadn't you written him about our plans?" cried Lissy.

"I hadn't written him at all—in ever so long. He travels about so, I wasn't sure a letter would find him," said Marjory, "but I'll write him to-night and send it to New York."

"Couldn't he possibly come here—don't you suppose?" said Lissy.

"Oh, no," said Marjory importantly. "My Daddy's at the head of so many big companies and all sorts of things like that,

Lissy. He'll just have to stay right in the city. But, never mind, I'll just write him that I'm going to spend that week with you."

Lissy looked very sober.

"But, Margie," she said soberly, "won't your father be very lonesome?"

"Yes," said Marjory. "Daddy hates that house since Mother died. He never stays there alone, if he can help it. But he can go to a hotel or to his club—he often does."

Lissy looked still more sober.

When they were almost at the schoolhouse she said:

"Margie, dear, I think you ought to go to your father."

"Maybe you do, but I'm not going," said Marjory firmly.

Both little girls were so sober all day that Miss Doris couldn't fail to notice it.

"What is it?" she cried gayly, as she found them waiting for her, one on each side of the path, when school was out.

"Lissy thinks I ought to go to New York and stay with Daddy at Easter," said Marjory, "instead of coming to The Penny Bank as we've planned. And I don't want to. And I'm not going to."

"Her father has written her to," said Lissy. "And if she doesn't, he'll be all alone in a big, empty house, or hotel or somewhere. He needs her, Miss Doris."

"Very well," cried Marjory, with a toss of her pretty head, "if you don't want me, Lissy Penny, I can stay at home, I suppose."

"Oh, I didn't mean that—you know I didn't," cried Lissy, almost in tears. "I'd feel just as badly as you if you can't come. But I do think your father needs you most, Margie—he hasn't any one else."

Miss Doris knew that this was a good time for her to keep still. But she squeezed Lissy's hand comfortingly as she said good-night to them. Marjory didn't even say good-night to Lissy. She went straight up the hill toward Overbrook, her head very high, in spite of a sudden spatter of April rain.

Poor Lissy watched until Marjory was quite out of sight. She wanted so to call to her to come back and wait till the rain was over. But she didn't. She wanted to cry dreadfully all the evening. But there was always so much to do in The Penny Bank there wasn't much time for tears. And when she went to bed, though her heart ached sadly, she had shed only two or three tears before she was sound asleep.

Marjory went home through the rain. After she had slammed three doors, upset a

chair, and scolded poor William Gray for getting in the way, she did cry. She not only cried; she screamed. She had not acted so in a very long time—not since she had known Lissy, Mrs. Brown and Annette told each other, as they flew about and tried to do things for her. She would surely make herself ill again. And it was too bad—just when she was beginning to be so much better. Whatever it was she wanted the poor, dear child must have it—and have it at once.

But it turned out to be something Miss Marjory didn't want—not something she did want—this time. And when, at last, it all came out that she didn't want to go to New York to spend Easter with her father, and that she just would not go and that was all there was to it, every one was so surprised they did not know what to do. For

Mr. Brook had never before asked for Marjory that she had not been eager to go to him.

"It's those Pennys," said Annette, quite forgetting how she, herself, had always approved of the Pennys and what they had done for Miss Marjory.

So Marjory stormed and cried and refused to eat and did all the things she had often done before. And after a while, quite tired out, she lay still on her little bed. And some new strange thoughts began to come into her head. Could it be that Lissy was right. Did Daddy need her so much that she ought to give up the visit to The Penny Bank and go to him instead? It would be very hard. Marjory didn't like hard things like that—at least she did not think she did. She had never tried many. But— Marjory sat up and stared at an

April cloud showing a beautiful silver lining in the sunset.

Everybody loved Lissy. In a dim sort of way it came to Marjory just then that maybe it was because she always gave up things, herself, to make other folks have a good time. It was not hard for Lissy to give up things—at least it never seemed to be. Maybe she had done it so much that she sort of could not help doing it almost all the time. Marjory wondered awhile about this, while the big cloud showed rose linings as well as silver ones. Marjory decided quite suddenly that she would begin giving up things, too,—only she would begin with something easier than this visit. Then she remembered how cross she had been to Lissy. She wondered if Lissy would stop loving her? No, she was quite sure Lissy would not do that—Lissy could

not help loving people. It was the way she was made. Marjory wished she was made that way. She wished she liked to do hard things. Maybe, if she began with a very hard thing—

Marjory jumped from the bed. She went to the window and looked out at the cloud, which was not much of a cloud any more. The sun was laughing right through it, and saying, "Good Night!" Marjory didn't even wait to see him go. She had made up her mind. She would do a hard thing—a very hard thing—the hardest thing she had ever done, of her own will, in her life. She went over to the beautiful little desk, which stood in one corner of the beautiful room. She turned on the pretty electric light. She took out her paper with the graceful M. F. B. engraved on it. She took her own little gold pen. All by her-

self, after spoiling two sheets with big tear blots, she wrote one of her own dear little letters—the kind Daddy loved to get:

"Dear Daddy," said the shining pen-point,

> "Of course I will come to spend Easter with you in New York. It will be lovely to see you again. And we will have the best time we can—you and I, Daddy-dear.
>
> "Your very own,
>
> "MARJORIE-GIRL."

Maybe the note sounds easy to write, but it was not. To begin with, with all Marjory's faults, she always meant to tell the truth about things. And she did not want Daddy to know how much she did not want to come. She wanted him to think she came gladly as she always had.

"By the time it's time maybe I will be glad," she said to herself. "Anyhow, I can't do any better with it."

Marjory sent Thomas way down to Brookside post-office that very night to mail her letter.

And when she looked out of her window, on the way to bed, there wasn't a cloud anywhere—just soft skies and twinkling stars everywhere.

Next morning, when Lissy looked anxiously up the hill toward Overbrook, she saw a little figure in white flying toward her. Lissy waited.

"I'm going to New York," cried Marjory, "Saturday morning, Lissy. I've written Daddy. So you and Miss Doris will have to have all your good times without me."

"We won't have the good times without you," cried Lissy. "We'll just save them till June—they'll keep, Marjory. Then you can be in them, too. Oh, I'm so

sorry you're going and so glad, both together."

Marjory stood in the road and stared at Lissy.

"Why, so am I," she said. "But I'm all sorry that I said cross things yesterday, Lissy."

"You couldn't help it," said Lissy. "Nobody could. I was so cross to poor Patrick White last night that I had to ask his pardon this morning."

Of course Miss Doris heard all about things as soon as Marjory and Lissy reached the schoolhouse. And she gave Marjory the very kind of kiss she always give Lissy.

"You're a plucky little girl, Margie-dear," she said. "And I'm proud of you!"

CHAPTER XIII

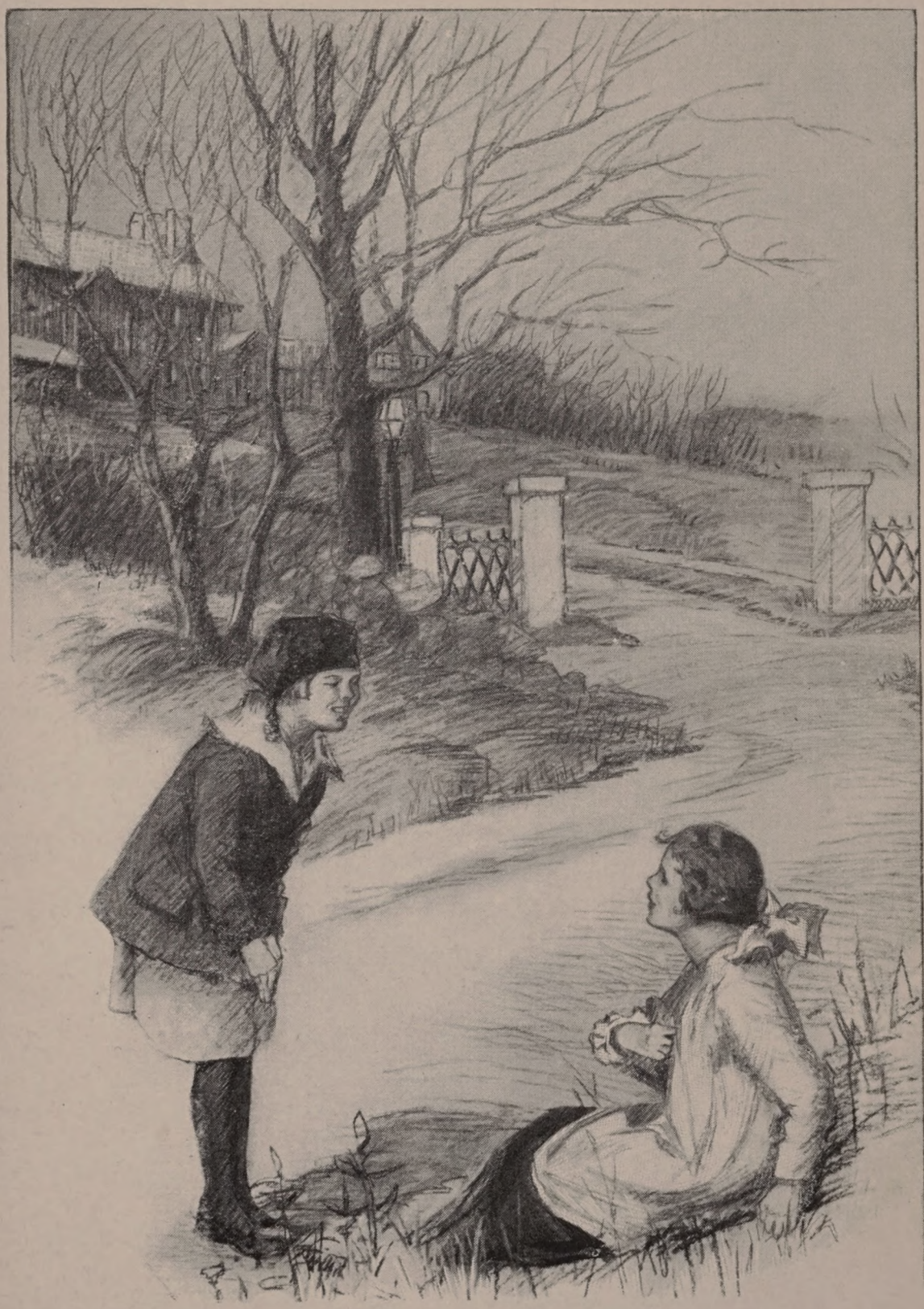
A LOST PENNY

NEXT morning, when Lissy saw Marjory, she ran up the hill to meet her. For Marjory was flying her hands and crying something that even before you could hear any words, you knew was delightful.

"Oh, what do you think, Lissy Penny?" she cried. "What do you think? The very loveliest thing in the world has happened. When Daddy got my letter saying I would come, what do you think he did?"

"I—don't—know," cried Lissy breathlessly.

"He called me right up on the long distance telephone," went on Marjory. "I



"SHE SANK DOWN IN A LITTLE HEAP ON THE GRASS"

talked with him myself. And he said—Melissa Maud Penny—he said I was to bring you to New York with me for a whole week. Now, what do you think?"

"Me—to New York?" gasped Lissy. She sank down in a little heap on the grass. "Why, a little Penny couldn't go to New York—really—Margie!"

"Yes—it could," said Marjory impressively. "When my Daddy says so. He's written your father—and all. We're to go this very Friday night—you and Mrs. Brown and Annette and Thomas and I."

"But I don't dare hope too hard," said Lissy when the wonderful news was told Miss Doris. "Not till I've asked Father. He may say 'No' so hard, I can't go."

What Mr. Brook wrote Father, Lissy didn't know. What Aunt Melissa said to him, she didn't know. Really, though, it

was neither Mr. Brook's letter nor Aunt Melissa's words that decided him to say "Yes." It was his little daughter's eager face, her beseeching gray eyes, and her voice, which didn't often ask things for herself, saying, "Won't you please let me go, Father, just this once?"

Lissy wondered then, though she understood later, why Father took her up into his arms and held her closely while he said,

"Yes, little daughter, go this time. Have a good time every minute—just as good a time as you always help us all to have. But—you will come back and be happy again in The Penny Bank, won't you?"

"Why, of course, Father," cried Lissy, hugging him as hard as she could. "You can't have as good times anywhere as you can in The Penny Bank!"

Miss Doris was glad she had made so

many pretty things for Lissy to wear. There were some little new wash dresses made from materials John had sent especially for Lissy. There was a little coat and skirt suit which made her look quite grown up. And there was a real little silk gown of dull rose-color in which she looked quite as pretty as Marjory herself. And the little girls' clothes were all packed together in a trunk of Marjory's.

It was almost dark when they started. Lissy kissed every one several times over. There was a minute when she was almost ready to cry to think they weren't every one going. She begged Miss Doris to stay right at The Penny Bank until she came back herself. And Miss Doris promised she would and said she would help look after Pet and Trixy and feed Patrick White.

Not long after, Lissy found herself on a big train which rushed away with them through the soft warm spring darkness. She and Marjory were put to bed in the dearest little beds, something like shelves, Lissy thought. Through the window, Lissy could see a big bright star that twinkled and twinkled. She smiled at it, and said her prayers over twice, and went to sleep.

The next minute—or so it seemed to Lissy—the sun was looking at her over a broad blue river, and Mrs. Brown was calling to her to get up. When they were dressed, the train rolled into a big strange place, and they hurried through a beautiful station and were put into a beautiful car and went through crowds of people and carriages and cars, and turned at last into a broad beautiful street where there was a park, and where the houses were all like palaces. Be-

fore one of the biggest of these they stopped.

Marjory's father took Marjory into his arms. Before Lissy could even feel strange he found room for her, too.

They all went into a wonderful house where their feet made no sound on the thick, soft carpets and rugs. Servants waited everywhere to do everything for them. The rooms they went through and the ones they caught glimpses of were too beautiful to be really true. And by and by in one of the most beautiful, at a beautiful table, all flowers and fruit and tinted china and sparkling glass and silver, they ate a wonderful meal, called breakfast.

The days that followed came and went like dreams to Lissy. They went through wonderful stores where you could buy anything, it seemed, and where Mr. Brook did

buy all sorts of things for both little girls. They took long walks and drives all over the city, through crowded streets and beautiful parks like fairyland. They went to a children's play, which Lissy thought was too lovely for any common words to even try to tell about. They went for rides on the river, sometimes coming back at sunset, sometimes by moonight. There was no end to the wonderful things they saw and heard and did. And always, most wonderful of all, it seemed to Lissy, was coming back to the great, beautiful palace of a home, with its books and pictures and mirrors and furniture and lights, and colors, its glass-house full of flowers, its music-room in which Marjory played a little on the grand piano, and Mr. Brook a great deal.

Then there was Lissy's own room, all in soft rose-color, with Marjory's, all in dull

blue and white, opening from it. Oh, Lissy was sure there was never, never any other home quite so big and wonderful as this one of Marjory's.

Coming home from a last visit to the shops to buy things for the little Pennys—and the big ones, too—and Miss Doris, Mr. Brook was stopped by a man in a car who said Mr. Brook was needed for something very important away back down town.

Mr. Brook looked troubled.

"Could you and Lissy go home alone?" he said. "You go to the next corner and turn, and there you are, you know."

"Oh, Daddy," cried Marjory, "of course we can. You always seem to think I'm a baby, yet. Why, I'm eleven years old."

Mr. Brook smiled. Marjory seemed, at times, to have forgotten her life with the Gypsy Troupe. But he had not.

"Hold fast to Lissy," he said.

Then he got into the car with the man and away they went down town.

"He'll be gone ever so long," said Marjory, as they reached the house in safety. "We may even have to go to bed without seeing him. I know that man—and he always keeps Daddy. It's too lovely to go in, yet. I'll get Annette, and then we'll go over and sit in the park."

"I'll wait here," cried Lissy.

She sat down on the lowest step. She was so happy thinking over the presents for the Pennys that she did not notice a man who stood near watching her. She did not see him as he came up.

"Your father wants you to come to him at once," said the man. "He's met with a bad accident. He told me I'd find you here."

Lissy had just been thinking of father. She started up in alarm. Packages fell all about her unheeded.

"Father?" she cried. "An accident? Oh, let me just tell somebody—then I'll go."

"Can't stop a minute if we catch the next car," said the man.

Already he was hurrying Lissy down the street. In another minute they had turned the corner and she was hurried aboard a crowded car. At first Lissy was so frightened about Father she could not think of anything else. She only knew that the car carried her on and on through crowded streets. By and by, the man stopped the car, helped her off, and began walking briskly along.

Lissy's brain began to ask her the question it should have asked her at the first

minute. "Why had Father sent this stranger for her?" She looked at him curiously. He wasn't the kind of man Father was—he didn't look like a friend of Father's. Lissy looked at the street—its buildings were not like those she had seen while in the city.

"Is this the way to the station?" she said suddenly.

"Your father was hurt in his car," said the man.

Lissy stopped so short the man had to stop, too.

"My father hasn't any car," she said. "He doesn't live in this city at all."

The man laughed disagreeably. But he hurried her along. Lissy, quite breathess, was guided around a street-corner straight into the arms of a large woman who seemed to be waiting for her.

"Here we are, Sue," said the man.

"My, but you've grown, dearie," cried the woman. Then she stared down into Lissy's white, frightened face. Her own face fell.

"This is the wrong child, Dick," she said. "She isn't the little girl we had before."

"Looks like her to me," said Dick sullenly.

"A little—maybe," said the woman, looking Lissy over carefully. "But she's not the child. And the little Brook girl has no sister. We've looked up that family—Hal and I—since we lost the other little girl and the reward. This child isn't a Brook. She's too poorly dressed."

"Picked her up at the Brook house," grumbled the man. "But there's nothing to do now, anyhow, Sue, but let her go again. You've told all you know. And that child has heard every word."

"A child doesn't notice," said the woman. "If you found her at the Brook house, maybe Mr. Brook would offer a reward for her."

"No, he wouldn't," cried Lissy suddenly. " 'Cause I don't belong to him at all. But, if he did, I wouldn't let him pay it. I'd tell him you were the same people who had Marjory once. And how you'd tried to take her again—just to make him pay. You said so yourself. You'd better let me go."

The man and the woman looked at each other. Then they talked in low voices. Lissy could not understand them. After awhile the woman took Lissy by the hand and walked with her in silence for a long distance. By and by, they took a car and rode for a longer time than they had walked. When the car stopped in the midst of a

crowd the woman helped Lissy off. But, next minute, when Lissy looked around for her, she was nowhere to be seen. Lissy felt more alone in the midst of that hurrying, jostling city crowd, than she had ever felt in the woods at home.

"Well," she said to herself, "they've let me go, anyway. Now, all I've got to do is to get back home. Where will I begin?"

Just here the crowd threw Lissy into the arms of a stout policeman. When she told him where she wanted to go, he said:

"*The* Mr. Brook's?"

"Yes," said Lissy. She decided Marjory's father must be known everywhere.

The policeman put Lissy aboard a car, spoke to the conductor about her, and away she went. She thought, sometimes, she would never come to the end of that ride. But, after awhile, she saw a friendly look-

ing street, then another and another. Then the car stopped and the conductor put her off.

"Right around that next corner," he said, pointing up the street.

CHAPTER XIV

IT RETURNS

WHEN Lissy turned the corner, she looked up eagerly, expecting to see the big Brook house just ahead of her. There it was, a-twinkle with lights from roof to sidewalk. But somehow, to Lissy, it seemed that it had crossed the street since she saw it last. Maybe, though, she had crossed the street. As that seemed more natural, she crossed it again, dashed up the steps to the house, rang the bell, and waited, quite breathless with her strange adventure. No one seemed to be looking for her, or at all disturbed because she had gone. Could it be that no one had missed her yet?

The next minute she heard a rush of feet down the stairs and a chorus of voices talking and laughing. Then the door flew open.

"We couldn't wait for Smith," cried a voice. "So, we just came, ourselves. Why, it isn't Joe, after all!"

A girl with a funny little face and bright, eager eyes, pushed a lock of dull brown hair out of them, and stared, bewildered, at Lissy. Back of this girl, there were other children—Lissy didn't know how many.

"Why, it's Lissy from The Penny Bank," cried the girl, as if she couldn't quite believe her eyes. "Don't you know me? I'm Nancy Spindle. And I'm more surprised to see you than you were that rainy night to see me. But I'm glad as I can be —do come in."

She drew Lissy, trying to explain, into the big beautiful hall. It was fragrant with flowers. Softly shaded lights like great flowers, themselves, in shape and color, burned here and there, although it was not yet quite dark out-of-doors.

"Here are my Marties—both of them," cried Nancy Spindle. She brought Lissy to a standstill before a red-headed little girl, plump and pink-cheeked. Close beside her was a slim, dark-eyed, serious boy, who smiled shyly at her, holding out his hand. "And here comes Betty—Joe's Betty, you know. We're all here visiting her—isn't it lovely? Joe's coming to-night for his Easter vacation. We thought you were Joe, you know—that's why we all came rushing to meet you."

While Nancy rattled on, the prettiest little girl Lissy had ever seen came down

the last steps of the long flight of stairs. She smiled and held out both her hands.

"You're just in time for my party," she said gayly. "Do come upstairs and take off your wraps. And meet Mother—Nancy's told her about you and your quaint old home, and the babies and the cats, and all. Do come."

"But I can't," cried Lissy. "I'm lost—or something. I don't feel quite lost with you all, but—I meant to go to Mr. Brook's house, you see. How did I get here?"

"You turned the wrong corner," laughed Betty. "Many people do that. This is the Blake house—my Father's, you know. Mr. Brook lives just a little way from here on the other side of the street. It's only a step. Joe will take you when you want to go. But you must stay for my party."

"Oh, no," cried Lissy, in spite of four

eager faces all asking her to stay. "You see, I'm more lost than that."

But just here the door-bell pealed again, and in came Joe with the big brown and white dog which Lissy remembered. Every one began to talk, and it was some time before Lissy could make them hear her again.

"Oh, please, Joe, or some of you, do listen to me just a minute," she cried at last so wildly that every one stopped talking to look at her. "I must get back to Mr. Brook's house just as soon as I can. You see, a man took me away from there this afternoon, and he meant to take Marjory. It was the same one who took her, the other time. They said so. Oh, please, some one, take me back home, so I can tell them all about it."

"Joe will, of course," said Betty. "Oh,

dear, we ought to have let you go at once. But never mind—it will be all right just as soon as you do get there. And, Lissy, come back to the party—you and Marjory Brook. Father knows Mr. Brook, and Nancy Spindle knows Marjory, and the rest of us want to. Bring them both back with you, Joe."

Joe and Lissy, with the big dog on a leash, crossed the street in front of the Blake house, went back to the street where Lissy had left the car, and, instead of turning to the east as she had done, turned to the west, and, there, just where it belonged, stood the Brook house. It looked for all the world like the twin of the Blake house.

In front of it, was a red car. Mr. Brook was just getting out. Marjory, bareheaded, was clinging to him, talking excitedly. Holding fast to Marjory's dress, was

"MR. BROOK WAS JUST GETTING OUT"

Annette. And on the steps, pale and frightened, was Mrs. Brown.

"He took Lissy away with him," Marjory's shrill little voice was saying. "It was that Dick-man. I'd know him anywhere, Daddy. I saw him just as they went around the corner. And he slouched along, just like Dick. And I ran and Annette ran. But they had taken a car when we reached the corner, and we couldn't tell which one. And no one knew what to do. We've 'phoned everywhere for you, but we couldn't find you. And Thomas started after them. Oh, Daddy, do hurry and find Lissy."

"I'm found," cried Lissy. She and Joe and Fritz all arrived at the steps of the Brooks' house, a breathless trio, but all trying to talk or bark, or do something which took still more breath. Somehow, they all

got into the house. Mr. Brook, grave and stern, held fast to Lissy and Marjory, too. As soon as she could, Lissy slid a comforting little hand into his.

"Please don't look so," she begged. "They'll never, never dare try that again. They know I know all about them—and how they took Marjory before for money and everything. They knew I understood every word they said and everything they meant. I said I did and they had better be careful. They hurried me back as fast as ever they could."

"But if anything had happened to you, Lissy," cried Mr. Brook, "what should I have said to your father?"

"But there didn't—there didn't," said Lissy. "And, don't you see, Mr. Brook, how much better it was that they took me instead of Margie? They'd never have let

Margie go again without a big reward. That's what they meant to have before, and they fooled themselves. But just think, Margie," she added, "that silly Dick man never saw any difference between Marjory Brook and Melissa Maud Penny. Did you ever hear of anything so funny?"

"I don't wonder," said Joe. "You do look alike. How's Billy, Marjory?"

"Billy?" cried Marjory, letting go of Lissy to stare at Joe.

"Maybe you don't remember me," laughed Joe. "But don't you remember Fritz and how he took Billy—basket and all—and I brought him back, and we traveled together?"

"Oh, oh, Daddy," cried Marjory. "This is the nice, red-cheeked boy—the one I told you about. Isn't he nice?"

Joe's nice red cheeks grew redder, as Mr.

Brook came to him, and put both hands on his shoulders.

"So it was you who was so good to my little daughter," he said. "I don't know what she would ever have done if it hadn't been for you. Somehow, Joe, your family and mine seem meant to know each other. Of course I do know your father a little. And every one knows something about that wonderful little mother of yours. Then, there's Nancy Spindle—we know her."

Joe laughed.

"Let's all get better acquainted," he said. "Betty has invited Lissy and Marjory to her party to-night. And as it's part mine, I'll invite you, Mr. Brook. Mother's there, and, as a great treat, Father's going to be home, too. Do come—all of you."

Later, when Marjory and Lissy were all ready for the party, Marjory came slowly

toward Lissy, her eyes big and bright with wonder.

"Lissy Penny, come here, quick," she cried. She pulled Lissy to a long mirror near by. "Daddy," she said the next minute, "we do, we do! Lissy and I do look alike, don't we?"

Mr. Brook smiled over their heads at the two eager little faces in the mirror.

"Come to take a good look at you," he said, "I almost believe you do!"

CHAPTER XV

A DIME FOR THE PENNY BANK

ALMOST the last minute before starting for home, Lissy found that she and Marjory and Mrs. Brown were to go home with Mr. Brook in the car, instead of by train. Lissy was so delighted that she hopped about like a distracted little bluebird.

"Oh, it's just the loveliest thing that ever happened!" she cried. "Isn't it, Margie?"

"Not quite," said Marjory. She stopped in a gay little dance of her own, and clapped her hands over her mouth. "The very loveliest thing that ever happened will happen to-morrow. But I've promised and promised I won't tell."

Lissy couldn't even imagine anything lovelier than that ride at all likely to happen to her. She enjoyed every inch of it. She enjoyed luncheon at a big hotel in a big city, supper in a small one in a dear little country town, the long ride in the moonlight afterward, and the night in another great city. Best of all, maybe, she enjoyed starting off again in the early morning, when the dew shone on everything, and birds sang, and flowers opened bright eyes to the sun.

Best of all? No, the very best of all was when the car swept up to The Penny Bank, and Father lifted her down, and kissed her again and again, and said how he had missed her every minute, and was so glad she was back home again. Then Aunt Melissa and Miss Doris and Bob and Bert and Pet and Trixy and Patrick White all clus-

tered around, and every one talked and asked questions and Lissy tried to answer, but kept saying over and over again,

"Oh, I'm so glad I went, and I'm so glad I'm back!"

Marjory begged to stay to supper and her father said she might and he would come back after her in the evening.

"Then we'll talk it over, Penny," Lissy heard him say to Father.

"It shall be just as she says, Brook," Father answered gravely. "I've decided that." His eyes, as he looked at Lissy, were so sad and yet so loving that she slipped away from all the clinging little hands, flew to him, put her arms up around him, and pulled him down for a kiss.

With every one undoing presents, and wondering how Lissy had known just what to get for each one, supper somehow got

eaten. Lissy said she must wash dishes to feel she was really back home again. So she slipped into a little old muslin gown and went to work. And Marjory slipped into another, which Lissy had outgrown, took the dish-towel away from Miss Doris, and went to work, too. So, everything was done and in order in The Penny Bank, and all the Pennys, big and little, were out under the trees, when Mr. Brook came into the yard. Just as every one was ready to listen to what he wanted to tell them, a gay, brisk step was heard, a gay, brisk whistle keeping it company, and into the yard came John Penny.

"Thought I'd surprise you," he said to the delighted little Pennys, who clung to him. He smiled at Miss Doris, and she smiled back. Lissy didn't think she looked surprised, although she did look pleased.

"I'm glad you've come, John Penny," said Mr. Brook. "First, there's a position ready for you in New York as soon as you can take it. And—I may want your help in another matter."

"Just a minute, Brook," said Father quietly. "The other matter is to be decided just as Lissy says. No one must influence her at all."

Lissy looked up, her eyes full of questions. Father looked so old and tired and sad. She crossed over to him and sat down. She slipped one hand into his and held on tight.

"What must I decide?" she said.

"Mr. Brook is waiting to tell you, dear," said Father. He squeezed the bit of a hand in both his.

Then Lissy saw that every one was sitting still and looking straight at her. Marjory's

face fairly shone. And Mr. Brook's eyes smiled into hers.

"Marjory and I have talked many times," he said quietly, "about how big and empty our homes are for one little girl all by herself. I am away so much. But, until awhile ago, Margie didn't want to give up anything to any other little girl or boy—"

"But I do, now," said Marjory, her cheeks red. "That was before Lissy showed me how lovely it is to share things." She smiled at Lissy. And Lissy smiled back.

"So, when I found that Marjory was ready," went on Mr. Brook "all there was left was to decide just what little girl or boy we should take. We decided on a little girl, Lissy. She will be my own little daughter and Margie's own little sister. She shall share everything with Marjory—

have all the chances she has. She shall go to the best schools, and by and by to college. She shall travel at home and abroad. In short, Lissy, she shall be just as much my own little girl as Marjory is." Mr. Brook paused.

"And you want me to decide," cried Lissy. "Oh, how perfectly lovely." She beamed at everybody. "Now, let's think—what little girl is there? Is Nancy Spindle too old?"

"Just a minute, Lissy," said Mr. Brook. "We've decided on the little girl. What we want to know is, if the little girl will come to us?"

"Oh, Lissy, Lissy, dear," cried Marjory, "what other little girl could Daddy and I want than you? It's you, of course,—you, you, you! You're to live with us always, and go everywhere I do, and have every-

thing I have—just as good times as we've had this week, Lissy, all the time—think of that. You'll be my very own sister—Lissy Brook. Isn't that the loveliest thing? Didn't I tell you?"

Lissy stood up. She looked in a bewildered way from one to another of the little group—Mr. Brook, smiling at her; Marjory, only kept from running to her by his restraining hand; Aunt Melissa, Miss Doris, John, all watching her eagerly; and the little Pennys clustered together and staring at her as if already she didn't belong to them; the old Penny Bank, with its vine-hidden porch, its wide-open door, and the sunset light on its windows. She turned suddenly and threw herself into Father's arms.

"Oh, I can't—I can't," she cried. "What makes you ask me to, Father?"

"It shall be just as you say, Lissy," said Father. "But before you decide, think what a good father Mr. Brook will make you—a much better father than I, my dear. You will have all the things you want and ought to have."

"But, Father," cried Lissy wildly, clinging to his hand, "if I did have all those things, and Margie, and Margie's father, I wouldn't have you—and John—and the little Pennys—and Aunt Melissa—and The Penny Bank!"

"You shall come here as much and as often as you like, Lissy," said Mr. Brook, quite as if the whole matter was really decided.

"Oh, but it wouldn't be home," wailed Lissy. "Oh, I can't, Father, unless you make me, I can't! You don't want me to, do you, Father?"

"It must be just as you say, Lissy," said Father. "But for your sake, I think you would better!"

"I don't care," cried Lissy. Her cheeks flamed red. "I can't leave you, Father, and I won't! Oh, dear Mr. Brook and Margie, I do thank you—indeed I do! And your home is quite the most beautiful place in all the world. I love it—and I love you. But I can't leave Father and the Pennys and The Penny Bank! You see how it is—don't you? They need me so much more than you do. And I couldn't get along without them. But I'll come to see you often—I'm sure Father will let me now."

Lissy's father drew her close to him.

"I'm willing to own," he said, throwing back his handsome head in just the way Lissy liked best, "that I haven't made the

best of my life. I've been discouraged, I suppose. And, Brook, I've been more or less envious of you—we started in about even, you know. You've had things I wanted. When you came here, knowing the past, I was afraid you would want something more of mine—and get it. You almost always get the things you want. I would not let my children go to you—for that reason—and another, which you know. But I've decided that with children like mine there's nothing that should really discourage a man. I'm going to make good, yet—I'm not an old man—you'll see!"

Of course the little folks did not understand all this long speech of Father's. But they did know that he was oh, so glad and proud that Lissy had decided to stay with him.

Mr. Brook went across the space between

them. He held out his hand to Father.

"There's a position in New York open to you, too, Penny," he said. "It's just the place for you. And now that I come here so often in my car, think how near you'd be to The Penny Bank. Better consider it."

"I'll accept it," said Father.

Then Marjory's father kissed Lissy. He said he couldn't help being proud of her, and wanting her more than ever. And after awhile Marjory smiled through the tears that would come, just at first, and she and Lissy put their arms around each other and kissed each other and found they were not so very unhappy after all.

It was as they stood, side by side, in Lissy's old worn-out muslin gowns, that Aunt Melissa spoke.

"What I'd like to have some one tell me is," she said, "why you don't tell them all

about it, and be done with it. They're alike as two peas in a pod, now, and the older they grow the more they'll show it."

"That's what I say," cried John Penny. "Why not tell them, Father?"

"That is as Brook says," said Father.

"Margie," said Mr. Brook. "I never meant to tell you this, but it is fairer to you, perhaps, to do so. When you came to Overbrook I would never have dared tell you, but—well, Margie-girl, you've changed since then. You are my little adopted girl, dear. Just as dear to me, always, as if you were my very own. We took you—my wife and I—when you were only a few weeks old, and we cared for you as if you had been our own baby, who had just died. No little baby was ever more welcome, or more loved; no little daughter in all the world means more to her father.

But you are—well, Marjory Brook, who do you suppose you are? Maybe, after all, you will think it a very happy thing."

"Who am I, Daddy, dear?" cred Marjory. She looked about her wonderingly. "You don't mean—you can't mean—but we do look alike; every one says so—oh, are we sisters—really truly sisters—Lissy and I?"

"Really truly sisters," said Mr. Brook. "Lissy's father is your father, dear. Your mother—and Lissy's and John's—died when you came. So, you see, your father had, beside you, two little children, and Lissy was only two years old. He didn't know what to do. He couldn't bear to give you up. He loved you just as all fathers love their babies. But he couldn't take care of three children—and one of them a helpless baby. And then, too, my wife and

I did want you so. So, after a long time, your father gave you to me. I made him promise that you were never to know that you were not my child, and you were never to have anything to do with his family unless I gave my permission. We both lived far away from here then. But soon after, your father came here. When I came, last fall, of course Lissy's father knew me and that you were his own little girl. But, true to his word, he wouldn't let his children come to you, not even when I wanted them very much myself. Well, you know the rest. We couldn't keep you apart. I was soon glad we couldn't. For I saw that Lissy and the Pennys and The Penny Bank and all you found here did more for you than all your money, dear. They've made you well and busy and happy and unselfish —just the little daughter I wanted to make

you, but didn't know how. Well, now, what do you think about it all?"

Marjory was in her father's arms.

"I'm so glad I can't be a bit sorry," she cried. "And just think, Daddy, dear, I've two fathers all my very own. She held out her bit of a hand to Lissy's father. "You're my father just as much as you are Lissy's. And, Lissy, you're my sister, even if you did decide not to be. You can't help yourself. And all your brothers and sisters—John and all—are mine, too—why, I'm a little Penny myself!"

After that, every one talked. Ever so many things came out. Of course John Penny had known all about it from the first, and Aunt Melissa. And John had told Miss Doris in the long letter after Lissy had sent him the photo of herself and Marjory. And Lissy was more than ever sure that

Marjory was like a story-book girl, or the "See-Saw Marjory" in the Mother Goose Rhymes.

Somehow, Father didn't look old any more—not one bit older than Mr. Brook. And everybody was so glad and excited that the moon came and looked down on them before any one knew it was time.

"Oh," cried Lissy suddenly, "just listen, everybody,—we aren't the five little Pennys any more. Marjory makes six—we're the six little Pennys!"

"And if we count in Papa Penny," cried Marjory, trying the new name she had selected for Lissy's father, "and brother John Penny, we'd have eight Pennys, big and little!"

"Oh, and Aunt Melissa—she's a big Penny," laughed Lissy. "That makes nine Pennys—now, if we only had one more!"

"I wish Miss Doris was a Penny," said Marjory. "Couldn't she be, somehow? Couldn't you, Miss Doris?"

Miss Doris's cheeks showed red even in the moonlight.

"I've just asked her, little sister Margie," said John Penny. "And—I think she will be!"

"Oh, oh," screamed Lissy. "There'll be ten Pennys—a whole dime for The Penny Bank, Margie!"

THE END

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